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"'IT IS LARGE FOR A SKETCH,' SHE SAID."

Author's Definitive Edition

ROLAND BLAKE

BY

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ROLAND BLAKE.

CHAPTER I.

"Let that bright north star of our race
Stern Duty guide thy certain life,
Through days of peace; to-morrow's need
Shall find thee ready for the strife."

AMIDST the great host which crossed the Rapidan early in May, 1864, with the sternly resolute man who was to determine the fate of the South, was Roland Blake. An orphan from his early years, he had been brought up on the shores of New Hampshire, near to the old town of Portsmouth, by an uncle, a Congregational minister, who was his guardian, and who had skillfully cared for the moderate estate left by the boy's parents. A thoughtful, quiet young fellow, he lived a wholesome out-door life, with sea and winds for comrades, while his uncle's personal attention to his education amply prepared him for his life at Harvard.

Nature gives to one man curiosity and little means to gratify it. To another she gives desire to know and the organization which can answer its demands. Then she has made an observer

and a friend to whom, with discreet reluctance, she tells her secrets. Directness and simplicity attend the practical workings of such persons' minds. They are poet, or naturalist, or both, as the rest of their mental structure determines, and are fortunate if fate cast their lot in early life remote from cities and put them in natural relation with the glorious company of sea and sky and wood.

Outside circumstances found in Roland Blake the qualities which make a man observant. The sea-side life gave him activity and physical vigor. The stern, practical, every-day existence of a home in which strong sense of duty ruled modified the natural dreaminess of a too thoughtful youth, on whom, also, the speculative turn of the ever-troubled New England mind was not without its influence.

Blake hesitated little when the war broke out. His own beliefs, his family traditions, and the decided anti-slavery opinions in which he had lived brought him home from study abroad and carried him into the army early in the great contest. Thus far the bullets which had cleared his way from the ranks to a captaincy had spared him from harm.

A dull sun rose red through the dust which already at early morn filled the air and lay thick on the unstirred leaves of the thin woods about Germanna Ford. It was May, but even at this hour the atmosphere was close and oppressive.

The sullen flow of the ruddy Rapidan was crossed by two pontoon-bridges of wooden boats, over which streamed steadily long trains of artillery, — dark-green caissons and flashing, brightly-polished cannon. The crack of whips, the rumble of wheels, the bray of mules, loud-voiced orders, oaths, and cries filled the air. Masses of infantry marched rapidly up to the shores, regiment after regiment, and in turn tramped in broken order across the swaying bridges. The bayonets sparkled over them in the yellow light, and the blue masses climbed the farther bank, disappearing among the thin woods and underbrush of hazel, scrub-oaks, sassafras, and pine, as the brigades of the Fifth and Sixth Corps marched into the sombre depths of the Wilderness.

On the banks were scattered groups of idle contrabands of all hues, from "sad-colored" to a tint deep as that of their own tobacco, liking the spectacle well, but apparently mere amused and not much concerned spectators. Now and then a chuckle rose as a man lost his footing on the bridge or a mule-team regaled them with brief rebellion; while the inventive capacity of the mule-driving American, much stimulated by being pitted against the noble simplicity of the mule mind, filled the air with ingenious blasphemy, to which the swearing of all other lands is as milk to apple-whiskey.

Then some headquarters wagons dashed up, and with the secure authority of aristocrats

scattered the motley collection of negroes, who moved away with muttered disgust, like people at a play who are put out of seats they consider their own. At the same time a staff orderly wearing the badge of the Fifth Corps rode up to a laughing group of officers lounging on foot, or lying down, or still in the saddle, in all sorts of such odd postures as become easy and restful to the man who has lived for a year or two on the back of a horse.

The orderly saluted, and said, "Headquarters wagons. Please make room."

"Hang these staff orderlies! They 're worse than old regulars!" exclaimed a lightly-built young lieutenant, an officer of the provost-marshal's guard, and bearing on his breast the badge of the Sixth Corps. He was watching with infinite amusement the humors of the first scene of the tragedy about to be acted out in the sombre woods beyond the river.

"Give me an old regular-army doctor for tip-top airiness," said a captain of volunteer cavalry, as he swung into the saddle; "but the staff fellows are bad enough." Everybody growled a little as they got out of their lounging attitudes and moved closer to the ford.

"By George," said the first speaker, "those darkies are like old Romans watching us poor barbarians go into the arena. Halloa! Give me your glass, Lawrence, — I thought so!" And he rode out from the group. "Why, there 's Roland Blake.

"Blake! I say, Blake!" he called.

An officer turned from the masses of an infantry regiment about to cross the muddy stream. He was a square-shouldered man of over middle height, and some twenty-four years of age. His face was grave and resolute, and carried a certain serenity of expression; the eyes were attentive, a good blue-gray, and about the lines of the lip there was a pleasant sweetness which the faint brown fringe of moustache failed to hide.

Several men rode up to meet him. "This is good," he said. "I have n't seen one of you since that last scrimmage at Gettysburg. How 's the arm, Francis?"

"Oh, that 's all right," said the other; "but I have been hit twice since. I always get hit," he added, gravely. "My career has been punctuated with full stops from rebel balls."

"Seems to agree with you," said a man at his side.

"It 's got past jesting." And then, his natural sense of fun overcoming him, "Whom the gods love die young; whom the gods hate get hit in every skirmish."

"I hope the gods will prove indifferent and forget me," said Blake. "I must go. Good luck to you all! Got any 'baccy, Phil? I 'm out."

Two or three men offered him scant contributions, with which he hastily filled his pouch.

"Thanks: that will do. See you again, Lawrence. Good-bye, Joe. I see you 're in the P. M.'s guard, Phil."

"Yes, for a while; I don't fancy it. Look us up at headquarters if you chance to get near us."

"There are our people," said Lawrence; "that 's the Sixth, I think. We 're come to stay this time, Blake."

"God grant it!" said the latter, as he made haste to regain his place.

"Same old boy," said Lawrence, as the group moved on towards the ford.

"I never thought he would have taken to anything as practical as war," returned the officer addressed as Joe. "There was always a queer mysticism in his talk when we were at Harvard."

"And yet if you want a thing done and well done no man is more practical than Blake," returned Francis.

"Well, he used to bewilder me at Harvard," said a captain; "it was wildly confusing at times."

"It is all on top, — outside talk," said Francis.

"Perhaps so. But certainly, he is the only person who is never bewildered by his own talk. The fact is, a fellow always knows when to believe himself and he don't always know when to believe another fellow."

"That 's about as clear as Blake," laughed Lawrence.

"Well, he 's a good fellow, at any rate, and the least self-conscious man I ever saw."

"That 's so," said another. "Hark! was that a gun at the front?"

"Hardly yet."

"Halloa! there 's the colonel. The air will be curdled with cussing when he hears I could n't find that ordnance wagon. Here goes for it! I shall cool off on the march." And he rode away.

Blake received on the morning of the 5th of May an order to report at general headquarters to the officer in charge of the bureau of information. Greatly surprised, he went through the needed formalities with his colonel, and set out to find the staff.

He walked rapidly through the woods and small clearings, asking his way as he passed the brigades which were hurrying by. Far overhead occasional bullets were whizzing through the air, and here and there young leaves and twigs were mysteriously falling. After a wearisome search of two or three hours, he came upon a small log cabin, in a little, squalid clearing, and knew by the headquarters flag that he had found what he sought.

As he approached the log house through the confusion of wagons, kicking mules, and orderlies going and coming, an old colonel of regulars came hastily out of the door.

Roland asked where he could find the provost-marshal, and announced his errand.

"Oh, you 're Captain Blake," said the colonel.

"That is my name. I am here to report."

"And have taken your time about it, too."

"I could get no horse, sir, and I found it difficult to find my way."

"You won't be the only one," said the grim old regular. "Pretty country to fight in! Can't see fifty feet ahead!"

"Bad enough," said Blake. "May I ask why I am wanted?"

"Yes. Come over here; we had best get out of earshot. These headquarters orderlies are as curious as garrison girls, and the aids are not much better."

So saying, he walked to the edge of the clearing and sat down on a stump. "Take a seat," he said. "You can't move your chair." Then he looked about him, and went on: —

"I am in charge of the bureau of information."

At this moment an eccentric shell turned a somersault about twenty feet above their heads, and gave vent to the strange howl which this performance always produced. The colonel's back being towards the coming projectile, he crouched ever so slightly, and, turning, glanced quickly at Blake's face: it showed no sign of amusement or other form of mental comment. The colonel went on: —

"Lieutenant Francis mentioned you to me this morning" —

"Hang Francis!" muttered Blake. "What's up now, I wonder?"

"Confound the musketry! Can you hear me? It must be getting warm in front. Ah!" and he lifted one foot hastily as a nearly spent bullet ricochetted past it. "As I said, I am in charge of

the bureau. My chief aid, Captain Weston, was drowned at Raccoon Ford yesterday. I want an officer in his place. Your colonel is an old friend of mine. He says you will do. It needs a certain kind of man, — a gentleman above all."

Blake bowed. "Is it an order, sir?"

"Yes; what the deuce else do you suppose it is?"

The captain did not like it; but he had resolved when he entered the service to accept literally and without complaint whatever duty came to him.

"What are my orders?" he said, rising. "I am ready."

"Good, sir! You will do. And now to business. It was a part of Weston's work to see and know all our scouts. They go out of our lines, get what news they can, and return, usually allowing themselves to be captured on the picket-line. They stay a day or so among the prisoners, and then are separated, as if to be sent North. Let us move a little; the bullets are getting rather too plenty, though they're mostly overhead. There; that is better," he said, as he got his back to a corn-crib. "Investigating prisoners is another duty. In fact, it is all simple enough."

Blake began to be curious. "Is there any immediate matter?"

"Yes, that is just what there is, — a difficult one. Oh, confound the racket!"

As he spoke, an officer's horse tied to a small

tree near by uttered a strange, wild cry, tore loose his halter, and rolled over, convulsed in death. A young aid ran out of the cabin to catch him. He stood a moment quite close to them, — a mere boy, — regarding the mournful eyes of the horse and its twitching upper lip. "I had as lief been hit myself," he said. Then he turned sharply, clutching at his own left arm. "Who struck me?" he said, and, tottering, fell on his face.

Blake ran forward and turned him over. The young fellow's eyes opened.

"Are you badly hit?" said the captain.

"Was it a bullet, sir? Not much hurt, I guess. How queer! — a bullet!"

It was his first battle.

Two orderlies carried him into the house, and Blake went back to the colonel.

"Bad hit?" said the latter, who had not moved.

"I think not."

The colonel continued: "Captain Weston alone knew the names of the one or two persons in our pay who are employed in the departments of the Rebel government. These names are kept as secret as possible, but must of course be known to some one, as I shall explain to you. I myself have never heard them. You will find them in an envelope: here it is. In case of risk of capture you will destroy the paper. Usually Weston did not commit them to writing, but as it was meant to order him elsewhere, he left them with careful memoranda for his successor."

"I see, sir."

"Weston has twice met one of the most reliable of these people, — a man really very valuable to us. He was to have seen him again to-night at eleven, about twelve miles from here; one of our scouts knows the place. These meetings are usually to receive important information, and to pay the rascal."

"I understand. I am to take Captain Weston's place and meet and pay this fellow. It is not a pleasant duty, colonel."

"No; but it is a duty."

"When should I leave?"

"Very soon. I will give you the needful papers now, and let you talk to Weston's orderly. But remember, carry no memoranda; run no foolish risks. We must on no account get this man into trouble at home. Scamp or not, he is worth to us a dozen such as you or I."

"Very good, sir."

"You will take five men, two scouts, and a guide. One of our scouts knows the country perfectly. You can trust Pearson to guide you. Of course you ride?"

"Yes; I am an infantry man now, but I am an old rider, and I served first with the cavalry. I shall want an outfit."

"That is easily arranged."

"My old regiment is part of your command. It is under the hill, sir, on the left. If there is no objection I would like to take a lieutenant."

"Yes, if you like; but the smaller the party the better. I would suggest your friend Mr. Francis. He is pretty well up on the roads about here, such as they are. There is the needed order. The men are attached to our service; your scouts know them well, and will help you to choose."

Blake asked a few questions, and then followed him to a tent near by in the wood, where the colonel gave him the necessary papers, and left him.

CHAPTER II.

— "The whole world
Hangs full of morals — as every twig in a hedge
Is endowed with a thorn."

— "But so the casual drift of circumstance
Catches us in its eddy."

DESPITE familiarity with death, Blake looked with some emotion over the careful directions left by his predecessor. It was easy to see that he had kept his official affairs in a state of preparation for another's eye. It gave the reader a strong impression of the simple soldierly readiness of the dead man, and with a feeling of being braced up anew by wholesome example, the young man went on to his task, his earnest intelligent nature intent upon carrying with a clear conscience the load the writer had laid down.

He soon learned that by the aid of a negro messenger the man he was to meet had communicated to Captain Weston the time and place of their rendezvous, and had drawn on a card a rough map of the roads, and such directions as were needed. All of these were given in capital letters, — evidently to avoid display of handwriting, — and the last line was underscored, and was to the effect that it was useless for any one to meet him except Captain Weston. A sealed envelope

marked "Private," and addressed "to my successor," in Weston's writing, explained matters more fully. It ran thus: "In case of disaster to me, I leave to any one who may be called on to fulfill my duties these memoranda. The three persons named are never seen except by me, and to me only are their true names known." Then came the names in question, with a few lines as to the need to make sure that no contingency of war should be allowed to throw these compromising papers into the hands of an enemy.

Blake's first care was to make two or three copies of the little map, and then to fix on his memory the three names given. He had noticed that they were numbered 55, 56, 57; and although Weston had neglected to state this, his successor easily concluded that these numbers were meant to be used in some way to identify the people with whom he was to confer. He had already made himself as familiar with the country as our very poor maps allowed, and for the lesser details felt that he must trust to his scouts.

He spent a few minutes more over the details of daily duty set out in a little blank-book, and sat awhile longer in half-bewildered consideration of the intricate and complicated system of acquiring intelligence of which he was to be a part. For a time he was to live among the baseness and trickery of spies, deserters, and prisoners, who could be led to tell what they knew. He did not at first recognize the fact that some of the scouts

who came and went between the two armies were gallant men, honestly believing in their own side of the great quarrel, and was for a time simply overcome by a horrible perception of the varied forms of villainy which have to be cultivated and rewarded to make an army successful.

War had indeed always seemed to him bad enough, but deaths of men were to his fine sense small affairs compared to this novel aspect of its evils.

At last he rose, thinking, "As well I as another. Pray God it last not long!" and making a fresh resolution to keep his soul as clean as possible from stain, he called aloud for the orderly.

The man entered, saluting.

"Is there a horse for me?"

"Yes, sir. Captain Weston had two: his man is close by with them in the wood. The colonel says you are to take one of them. I would take the dark bay; she won't be seen as easily as the gray. I was to tell you the detail from the provost-marshal's guard would be ready at five, and two scouts, sir."

"All right. And you go with me?"

"Of course, sir."

"Bring the horse at once. Is n't the 6th New Hampshire cavalry back here a bit?"

"Yes, sir, — three companies, — a mile or so it might be."

"Then take a horse, find Lieutenant Francis, Company B, deliver this order, and return at once."

"Yes, sir."

The lesser details of his preparations were soon completed, and about five o'clock Blake found his little party awaiting him well back in the woods, out of harm from the stray bullets, which by this time had been coming thicker, as Warren's corps was slowly pressed by Ewell's forces. Above the musketry he could hear the distant sound of unnumbered axes, where away on the battle-lines, not two hundred yards apart, both sides were "falling" trees to construct breastworks, abatis, and slashes, in a woodland so dense with underbrush that at this distance the hostile forces worked on unseen of one another.

Blake found his friend in charge of the little party, and every precaution for a noiseless march made with the deliberate care of men accustomed as were these to errands in which the clink and rattle of cavalry marching might have serious results. Sabres were caught between the leg and the saddle-leather, the chains tied up with scraps of blanket, the carbines secured.

After a careful inspection, Blake mounted, and the little troop rode away to the northwest, to avoid the left flank of Lee's army, and for an hour or more continued to meet bodies of cavalry and wagon-trains. After a while the sound of musketry was heard less and less distinctly, and at the fork of a road which follows the line of the Orange turnpike, Blake halted his party and drew aside into the woods.

"If I am correct," he said to his chief scout, "we go about four miles on this road to the upper water of Mine Run, and then cross the pike and the plank-road near Verdiersville. Do you know it well?"

"I was over it, at Captain Weston's request, yesterday, after he told me he expected to meet 56 to-night. Shall you wait for night to go on? It will be best. We go near some houses."

"You seem a cool hand," said Blake.

"Yes; I don't het up easy."

"Where are you from?"

"Tennessee, sir."

"And how came you to choose such a life as yours must be?"

"Well, it 's a long tale, captain. Mostly I hate 'em; had reason, I think. Then I like it; it ain't a reg'lar life, — a thing I could n't abide since I was a boy. Why, I used to plough crooked-like, to see if I could hit a stone or a weed with my eyes shut. Now, this here life is the highest kind of zigzag; suits me down to the ground."

The two officers laughed.

"Let the men eat; but no fire," said Blake, "and, above all, no pipes: tobacco smoke can be smelt a long way."

While they were in motion, Francis, an admirable officer, had been at one moment in the rear or flank, and then ahead with the scouts. Now he asked Blake what exactly was the final purpose of their march, and was told as much as his friend thought fit to disclose.

After a dismal delay in the rain-sodden woods, they started anew, with still greater precaution.

"You might 'a' bin in this sort of thing before," said the scout, as they turned into the mud of a cross-road. "You don't take no chances, I see."

"Never; but I am very anxious."

"Well, if you ain't bin in it the Lord's bin a-losin' a heap of your time. Might I ask for a bit of 'baccy, sir?"

"I don't chew," said Blake.

"Well, it beats Job for comfort; I 'm out of it."

It was dark when they turned southward, but the tall scout rode quietly on with the certainty of a woodcraftsman. Through exhausted tobacco-fields, into and out of stump-dotted clearings and little valleys where black-jacks, sassafras, and short pines made the night yet blacker, they passed on, seeing no one, and hearing rarely some good Confederate watch-dog. By half-past nine their way had led them well around the left flank of Lee's army. Here they passed a group of houses where were some lights. A large dog came out of a clearing and followed them, barking furiously; then a more distant friend took up the cry and howled a response.

"Hang that brute!" said the scout, and they pushed on faster, the Confederate canine at their heels.

"Got to kill him," exclaimed Francis. "A single shot is of no moment, and he will rouse the country."

"I hate it," said Blake. "Better to push on faster."

"He 's got to go, sir, — knows his duty, that dog does."

"Get it done, then."

"A shot barks worse than a dog." And so saying the scout dismounted, gave his bridle to a comrade, drew his sabre, and moving quickly away was lost to view in the sombre shadows of the wood.

Meanwhile the little party halted. Suddenly there was a howl of pain, and then a faint yelp — and silence. The too faithful sentinel was dead. The scout reappeared, and as he settled himself in the saddle, said, — "Darn it! I always did like dogs. The brute! he just come to me like he knowed me. I 'd as lief it had been his master. Hang the dog! What business had he got to foller us?"

CHAPTER III.

"War is the devil's nursery."

HALF an hour later they came upon a deserted ox-road which led out into a rather more open and rolling country, and could see in the far distance on the cloudy sky the ruddy upward flare of the camp fires of Longstreet's and Hill's brigades.

"What 's up now?" said Francis. "Confound the rain! I am as wet as a fish. Do we stop here, Pearson? It 's dark enough."

"Yes," said Blake. "The darker the better. Take the men into the wood. Remain mounted and ready. If I do not come back in one hour, Phil, return and report me missing. My traps are with the regiment; if anything goes wrong, take possession."

"All right, Roland."

"Now I must go. Good-by, old man, and look sharp. Pearson," he said to the scout, "come with me round the wood. I can't see the cabin. How it pours!"

"Not see it! That 's queer. Let me tell you again. Look to the left, — a break in the wood-line. Now can you see?"

"Yes, I have it. I follow the wood-shadows round the clearing to the right, then I rise the slope. No fences?"

"A hell-fence, sir, half way up."

"A hell-fence?"

"Yes, sir, that 's what they call 'em here, — pig-tight, ox-proof, hoss-high, stumps upside down. That mare 'll find a gap if you give her her head."

"Very good. On the crest is a deserted cabin; that 's all right, is n't it?"

"Yes, sir; and one thing: hitch your horse near the top, so you can get her easy, and walk up. The rebs are picketed clean up to the fourth field back of the house. Fasten your sabre under your stirrup-leather; if you have to run, it 's that darn unhandy" —

"Thank you. And now good-by, again, Phil."

They shook hands, and the scout went ahead. Blake walked his horse slowly along the edge of the wood. Soon they halted. "I shall follow you to the corner," said Pearson; "you won't have no trouble: 56 did n't never keep him long. If there 's a row I shall join you; so don't shoot me."

Blake then pushed on alone through the thick blackness, in the sullen rain-pour, and with some little trouble got through the hell-fence. The cabin-roof was clear in outlined view against the fire-lit sky. Dismounting, he fastened his horse so that a pull at the halter-loop would release her, took a roll of notes from his saddle-bag, and, making sure that the pistol in his belt could be easily drawn, walked up the slight ascent. Half-

way he stopped, a sense of unusual agitation upon him.

"I should think I might be a trifle nervous or scared," he said to himself, smiling; "yet the risk is nothing to that of a skirmish-line." He began to wonder why he was nervous, and concluded that it was the unusualness of the affair that disturbed him.

A moment later he stood beside the cabin. A dark opening marked where the door had been.

"Is there any one here?" he said, softly, a hand on his pistol. As he spoke, a tall man in a horseman's cloak came around the corner of the house, and paused.

"Stand!" said a voice evidently disguised and anxious. "Are you Captain Weston?"

"I am not. He is dead. I am the officer sent in his place."

"Stop! Don't stir, or I shall shoot. How am I to know you?"

"You are 56."

"What then? Can you name me?"

"Yes; you are"—

"Hold!" broke in the man. "Come closer; you need n't be afraid."

"That I am not;" and as he approached, the stranger pulled down his cap and drew his horseman's cloak up so as partly to cover a face which the darkness already quite concealed.

"Now! Speak low. Those pickets might chance to be restless." The speaker was clearly

uneasy enough, and kept glancing about him nervously. "And now," he said, "my name?"

"Richard Darnell."

"Well, that will do as well as another;" and he laughed, — a curious, out-of-place, untimely little laugh. "Let 's go in," he said, "and get through."

The Federal officer entered coolly in front of him, now having himself well in hand. The single room was almost pitch-dark.

"I am to receive from you a statement of the regiments of Longstreet's and Hill's corps."

"It is here in cipher; you have the key."

"Let me light a match and look over it. It may need explanation."

"Not as you value your life!" cried the other, fiercely. "I do not choose to be seen, and I don't want to risk attracting some straggler. Take it or don't take it, but let 's get done."

"Very good," said Blake, securing the little packet. "Here is your money. By George!" he thought to himself, "I came near saying Judas!"

"How much is it? I was to receive a couple of thousand."

"Here is that amount." The transfer having been made, he added, "I believe that is all."

He felt unwilling to say one needless word to this man. Yet, as he turned to go out, he had an eager desire to return and ask, "How can you do this thing?" A strange pity was in his heart. The crime seemed to him so awful.

As they came forth into the night, a few watching stars were over them, and the darkness was far less than it had been. The stranger again pulled down the visor of his cap and drew his cloak up about his face.

"How cool it gets!"

Blake made no reply.

"Where is your escort? I will see you down the hill."

"That is needless, my men are close at hand. I can go alone."

"Well, I have to be careful; your safety is essential to mine. You will pardon me. One word more."

Before this the man had spoken abruptly and more or less like an uneducated person. His last phrases betrayed him to a careful observer as of a higher social class. Blake paused, with a sense of sorrowful responsibility that was almost a pain.

"What is it?"

"You pledge me your word of honor as — as an officer that my name is known to no one but you?"

"I do."

"And your own name? you did not give it."

"No; I mentioned Weston, that was enough."

"Well, it does n't matter. How did you learn my name?"

"I found it on a sealed envelope."

"And do you keep it, sir, for your successor in like fashion?" The tone was imperative.

"I do not. I did not think it safe to leave it behind me to the chances of war. I burned it. Of course when I return I must make some such provision as Captain Weston made."

The other speaker was silent for a brief space. Then he said, "That is all. You will hear from me in the usual way within a week or two. Good-night."

"Good-night." And Blake moved away as the other turned towards the cabin.

The Federal officer looked back once or twice at the retreating figure until it was lost to view; then he made haste to find his horse. He untied the halter-loop and stood a moment, unable to escape from the unpleasant impression the interview had left upon his mind. Weird fancies went through his brain. "I should like," he thought, "to be that man for a minute. I wonder how much of his soul I have bought for that war-saint the devil. Well" —

He gathered the reins and set a foot in the stirrup. A slight noise in the wood close at hand disturbed the animal, which was never easy to mount. As Blake lifted himself there was a flash of light, a pistol-shot, a sharp pang in his right shoulder. The horse, touched on the back by the same shot, rose on her haunches, and, the pull on the reins sufficing with the weight on the stirrup to throw her, she fell heavily upon her master.

For a moment the shock confused Blake. When he dropped, a man ran out of the brush, pistol in

hand. As he did so, a second shot rang out below them. There was a noise of men in the distance, and a shot from the rebel pickets, and then another.

As the horse struggled to rise, Blake heard the man exclaim, with an oath, "I can't have missed him!" and then the next instant was free from the mare and giddily reeling, but on his feet, the scout beside him.

"Are you hit? Can you mount? Be quick: the pickets will be on us."

"Not much hurt, I think." And, aided by Pearson, he tumbled himself into the saddle.

The scout hastily led the horse down the slight incline. "Are you all right, captain? My horse is here in the wood."

"Yes; I am better."

"Then ride on as quick as you can along the wood."

A moment after, the scout was beside him. "By George, they 're about! Darn the moon!"

As he spoke, a dozen shots were fired from the rising ground beyond the clearing. The bullets flew harmlessly by them. Their horses, scared by the noise, broke into a run, and a few seconds brought them to the party in the ox-road.

Francis rode up to meet them, "What 's wrong? Are you hit?" he said.

"Not badly; only dizzy. Take command and push on. We shall have some of their cavalry after us."

"Get ahead, Pearson, and keep a sharp look-out."

As the trees became fewer, there being no fences, a man was sent out on each flank, and one kept well in the rear. Thus guarded, they rode on, the noise behind them growing fainter.

Francis fell back alongside of his friend. "Was it the pickets?" he said.

"No. I got through with my business, and was mounting when the rascal shot me. I don't think it is much, as I can move my arm, but it hurts like the mischief. Lucky the horse plunged as I mounted: nothing else saved me. The fellow was n't six feet off."

"Was it the spy, do you think?"

"I am sure. I was dazed for a moment, — just a moment. The ground was boggy, or I should have had a smash somewhere from the fall of the horse on me. The man ran up when I fell, and I heard him speak. Then the scout fired."

"Why, what at? He could n't have seen enough to shoot. He might have hit you, or" —

"Oh, he fired over us, merely as a warning."

"I see. Cool hand; saved your life, probably. Have you any idea why the man did it? Had you quarreled?"

"No. We simply disposed of our business and parted."

"How strange!"

"No. I understand it — at least I think I do; but to explain it would be unfair — I mean

would involve the breaking of a pledge. I can't explain it even to a friend like you."

"All right. You 're uncommonly particular about a scamp like that."

"I would rather keep my word to a scamp than to an honest man. It 's a promise after all; and the devil has good splints for broken promises."

"That is so like you, Roland. Halloa! What 's that? Halt!"

The scout came back in haste: "Those pickets have roused the bushwhackers. There 's a fair lot out ahead across the road. This way, sir; you can see them."

Riding on a few paces, Blake could see with his glass, as it was now early dawn, a small body of men in the road some quarter of a mile away.

"They are not regulars," he said.

"No, sir, — farmers, bummers, and the like. Shall we go through, or take to the woods?"

"We will avoid them if possible, and fight if we must."

Upon this the command turned into the brush, and rode due westward for an hour. Then they moved on again to the north, making a long circuit, and without further annoyance continued their cautious march.

Early in the morning they halted in a wood to breakfast, and then Blake found that his hurt was, as he had supposed, a slight flesh-wound in the shoulder. The horse had been merely touched by the ball.

Their long détour and the need to go slowly through a rough country made it noon before they began to come upon moving bodies of cavalry and vast wagon-trains, white-covered ambulances, and all the seeming confusion in the rear of a great army. Clouds of dust hung over the melancholy landscape. The rumble and rattle of wheels and moving horses, the curses of mule-drivers, the jingle and clatter of cavalry escorts, filled the air with a strange mass of sound; while above all rose the roar of distant cannon, the incessant crash of musketry adding to the volume of discords. No one they met seemed to know anything, except that Hancock had beaten Hill badly. Anxious and curious, they pushed on with such directions as they could get.

By and by they came on wretched straggling groups of wounded men, bloody, begrimed, and sullen, and here and there an ambulance, a moving jolting load of groans and execrations. Over the near distance a gray volume of smoke rose high in air or blew out of the woods in dim clouds, through which the spent balls began to fall.

After a long search, Blake found the provost-marshal's headquarters, and, making his report, had his wound dressed, and turned in to get a little sleep before attacking the manifold duties of his new position.

CHAPTER IV.

"Thou wert but a maid,
And with like passions stirred, like fears afraid;
With ruddy lips, and lovely cheeks, and eyes
That did not guess their own solemnities;
With every unseen maiden loveliness
That innocence doth hide and lover's fancy guess."

NORTH and South, over all the land, a new agony of expectation was in millions of hearts as the shuddering curtain was about to rise on the dark drama of the Wilderness campaign. Perhaps the gladiators in the arena felt its horrors least. Wife, mother, sister, waited with sad patience for news of the never-ending strife. We who lived through those years remember them as men recall the quake of a convulsed earth, and almost are vexed that our children can smile, and talk so lightly of what to us was living tragedy and to them is mere history, — an added task for school-taxed memory, and nothing more.

Yet even in those days here and there throughout the country were families strangely disconnected from active interest in the great struggle, either because of indifference due to a combination of easy circumstances with selfishness and the fact that no one they cared for was in peril, or of some absorbing matter closer at hand which

made the war seem to them a distant and trifling agency in their daily lives. Single individuals in these homes often suffered the more acutely for the hostile or careless atmosphere in which they lived.

The time was early in April, 1864, at that uncertain after-breakfast hour which exists in families where there is no steadying machinery of business needs to enforce punctuality, and where personal caprice is the rule of an unmethodical group of people.

The day was chilly; a small wood fire blazed in the grate. The furniture of the room was modern and commonplace, and hinted at no particular taste or individuality. Near the window, however, stood a commodious and plain table, out of keeping with the slightly-worn finery of the chintz-covered chairs and lounges. It was piled up with books and drawing-materials. On the floor near by stood an open work-basket, with bright floss-silk skeins hanging about it in disorder.

Presently the door opened, and a young woman entered. "A good hour to myself," she said, with a long-drawn breath of relief. A golden hour, she thought, — and how should she spend it? Then, feeling too warm, she opened wide both windows, and stood looking out for a few moments on Fifth Avenue and the rapid tide of men walking briskly down to their varied occupations in the busy city.

"Really," she reflected, with a sad smile, "I am like the Lady of Shalott." One or two of the passing men looked up with pleased surprise at the nobly-modeled head and the interesting face above them. Their owner, abruptly conscious, shrunk back into the room.

Next the endless sing-song of the newsboys struck her ear: "Grant about to cross the Rapidan! Great news from the West! Extra 'Herald'!"

"It is strange," said the girl aloud, "I am twenty years old, and of all the million of men who are staking health and life I do not know one, and there is not one whose death would bring me a personal pang. Grandmamma lives in the past, and Octopia thinks only of her brother and herself."

Then she paused and again spoke aloud, — a habit apt to grow upon those who, like Robinson Crusoe, dwell alone, or who, like this girl, live relatively lonely lives amidst unsympathetic people.

"I cannot do it," she cried, — the mention of her cousin's name having recalled to mind a little unpleasantness with which she felt that she must deal at once. Octopia had that morning asked her for a photograph of herself to send to Richard Darnell. This only brother of Octopia, like most of her Virginia cousins, Olive had never seen, and had heard of almost solely through his sister. It was characteristic of Olive's age that she did not

formulate distinctly her dislike to accede to what seemed so trifling a request. But the defensive instincts of wholesome-minded girls are strong and in effect far-sighted. She had said that she would see about it, and had observed the glance of surprise with which Octopia noted her doubt.

Her cousin had said, "Well, see to it at once, my dear, I am keeping open a letter to Dick and I cannot wait." The girl was well enough aware that what her cousin once set her heart upon she was apt to succeed in accomplishing.

As the young woman stood reflecting, the door opened and a gentleman entered the room.

"Good-morning, Mr. Pennell," said Olivia, her face cheerily brightening. "How are you? How rarely we see you!"

"I am very busy," he returned, "and just of late unusually so."

The new-comer was tall and paler than is common, slightly bald and clean-shaven. A man not over forty-five, he yet stooped somewhat and moved with conspicuous awkwardness. Uneasily shy, he absently put his hat on the open piano, removed it promptly and set it on the mantel-piece, from which it fell. Before he could recover it Olivia picked up the hat and stood holding it, a look of saucy mirth in her face.

"Please, Miss Olive," he said, seeking the restoration of his head-covering, without which his hands felt to him uncomfortably out of employment, "please, Miss Olive, could I see Mrs. Wynne?"

"You can see Mrs. Wynne, but you cannot see her, oh, no! and you can't have your hat either, until you have paid me a little visit. I have seen no one in a week."

"No one! oh, Miss Olive, no one! There is Miss Darnell."

"Yes, there is Miss Darnell. She is always there." He looked at the girl with a curious sense of the fact that she was growing older. "How are the clocks?" she added. "Please do sit down. How are the clocks? I wonder if I shall ever see them — or anybody."

"But when will you come? I am sure I must have asked you twenty times."

"And I have asked grandmamma twenty-five times. It does really seem as if I never have a minute to myself. I suppose other girls have. Three times last month I was to have gone to your house, and three times Octopia had something which must be done, — at once, Mr. Pennell, at once. I really begin to believe Octopia must be jealous of me."

Pennell blushed. "Oh, Miss Olive," he exclaimed, "I will speak to Miss Octopia about the clocks, and then perhaps" —

"Please not," said Olive hastily.

"But why not?"

"Oh! because — I really don't know why; but I would rather not."

"Then I will not," he said quietly.

At this moment the servant returned, and said that Mrs. Wynne would see him.

"But do ask for my cousin," said the girl. "If she sees you I shall have another quiet half-hour. No, you can't have your hat till you come for it. And please don't forget to stay ever so long with Octopia."

"Nothing could give me more pleasure than to do as you desire." He spoke, as he usually did, with a slight hesitation, which only left him when excited. His manner now was formal, and meant to indicate some slight disapprobation. It sat awkwardly on a person unconventional by temperament and education.

Miss Wynne looked up as he turned to leave the room, and felt rather than knew in some vague way that Mr. Pennell was annoyed. As he walked slowly up the stairs to visit Mrs. Wynne he reflected on the fact that this rapidly developing young person was clearly not in accord with at least one of the women with whom she lived; and from Pennell's point of view this seemed a simply curious and inexplicable fact.

Miss Wynne stood still a moment after he left her. Then she set the cherished hat on a table. "Really," she exclaimed, "he must like Octopia a great deal. I could spare him a large share of her affection and not miss it — much." Then abruptly, having some unused capacities for girlish fun, she was seized with a desire to make closer acquaintance with Pennell's comforter, his hat. She put it on, giving it a slight tilt backwards, stooped a little, and with a perfect imitation of his nervous speech said aloud: —

"Miss Octopia — I adore you, but that young woman does not. She did once, but" — at this moment Pennell reëntered the room.

He paused, bewildered.

"Oh, Mr. Pennell," said the girl flushing till her cheeks tingled — "I — I — please to forgive me — I am — such a fool sometimes. You won't mind what I said?"

"I — did not hear it, Miss Olive. You could not give me pain if you tried." "Oh! he must have heard," thought she. Then he smiled gently as he took his hat. "It is highly honored," and he brushed it affectionately. "I forgot that I had left my papers in the lining — and — I came back — for it. Good-by," — and he left her.

"There will be no lecture for that," said Miss Wynne. "He won't tell Octopia, I think," and she laughed gayly.

So saying, she turned to the table, reminded by the thought of her cousin of the matter which had begun to engage her attention before Pennell called.

Somewhat listlessly, she picked up one of the photograph albums then in vogue, and slowly turned the pages. At last her dead mother's picture caught her eye, and she stood a moment with filling eyes, and a sudden sense of the lonely abandonment of orphanhood. A bitter feeling of life's emptiness, of some unsatisfied, un-analyzed craving came over her. She was nobly gifted with the yearning instincts which are of despotic force

in the highest womanhood. It was love in its many forms which her life lacked.

It was surely not a full renewal of the child's grief which now stirred her being. The large charity of time had brought to her the human privilege of partial forgetfulness. If memory were perfect life would be unendurable. Still thoughtful, she turned the pages again.

At the end of the book were four portraits of herself. One picture was that of a girl of sixteen, with great eyes and a slight frame, the head too large for the body which in later years carried it so proudly. Under the photograph was written, in a feminine hand, "Olivia Wynne, Munich, æt. 16." "Ah, mother, I can't burn that!" She put it aside a moment, looked about her, and at last, lifting the tray of paints from her color-box, placed it beneath them. "She will never look there."

With the other likenesses in her hand, she turned to the window. "Why should I have this silly reluctance to burn them? It seems to me actually like an *auto-da-fé*. I must have been looking at Octopia when this was taken; it is as stiff and stately as Queen Bess in her ruff. Ah, dear old London! this is all I have left of you."

The next picture excited her intense amusement. "Did I ever look like that? I think it would disenchant Cousin Richard, if he needs disenchantment. It ought to be labeled Becky! and was I ever — ever as handsome as this? — 'Paris, 1860.' Ah!" — and she turned to the

mirror — "at least I am not now. They might be three women, Priscilla, Becky, Honora." And laughing at her fancy, she threw them on the fire, stirred them into the ashes, and gazed with clasped hands as they crumpled, changed, and smouldered away. Then she stood a moment moodily tapping the fender-bar with one foot.

"I suppose," she said, "there will be a fine fuss about this, but I will not sit again. If I have to, I will make faces." And a look of childlike mutiny came out upon her features. "I won't do it!"

The clock struck eleven. "Three quarters of an hour! I thought as much."

The door opened, and a small, aged colored woman entered.

"'Scuse me, Miss: Missus Octopy she want you right off."

"Tell her I am busy."

"Dat would be no use, Miss. Jus' bes' come along."

"Oh, very well."

"Shall I say you 's a-comin?"

"Yes, — anything you please."

The woman lingered.

"Say I will come at once," said Miss Wynne.

CHAPTER V.

"Our sacred selves! Have we
No charge to keep o'er this divinity
That lives in us?"

THE house to which I have carried my reader was rented in flats. The first and second stories, with a part of the third, were entirely taken up by the family group to which Miss Wynne belonged. A drawing-room on the first floor was used chiefly by her, save on the rare occasions, more frequent of late, when Octopia Darnell chose to share it with her. The apartment behind it was a dining-room, in which at times the whole family met when Madam Wynne, as she had been called in other days, was able to be present at meals. The second story was reserved for the bedroom and parlor of Mrs. Wynne, whilst Miss Darnell had for her own use a like space on the third floor, leaving to Miss Wynne a bedchamber, on the same story, known as a hall-room, and certainly quite insufficient to accommodate the person and the gowns of any young woman more luxurious than Olivia Wynne.

Two years before the date of this story, Miss Wynne, a girl of eighteen, was traveling in Europe with her father. Since the death of her

mother a large share of her young life had been thus spent, most of it on the Continent, and, except through rare letters from her grandmother, she had had little or no communication with America, where in fact neither of her parents possessed closer relatives than a few distant Virginia cousins, whose increasing poverty Arthur Wynne had from time to time relieved.

Then, as she remembered but too well, her father was summoned home by his affairs, while she was left at school near Liverpool. He wrote frequently as to the condition of the firm of iron-manufacturers of which he was the senior, and his letters showed a constantly increasing anxiety. He spoke angrily or sadly of the disgrace which he believed his partners to have brought upon his good name, and of his resolution to meet the crisis by every possible sacrifice. At last came the news of his sudden illness and death.

Of the sad voyage to America, and of the coolly tranquil welcome from a woman who no longer existed in the present or its emotions, Olivia Wynne had but too vivid a remembrance; it was, as it were, a wall of darkened days between a life of gladness and sunshine and that other period of bitterness and petty social oppression in which she still existed. When she met her grandmother, of whom as a young girl she had seen little, she found with surprise that her home was shared by a remote kinswoman of her father's. That this settled inmate of the home

now to be hers was not well loved by the older woman was soon plain even to so young a person as Olivia. It was obvious enough that Miss Darnell was, within narrow limits, useful to Mrs. Wynne, but neither time nor fuller opportunity for observation enabled Olivia to understand any better how two women so unlike and with so little that was mutually pleasing should have come to be voluntarily members of one family circle. That it was a permanent arrangement was made clear enough to her by even the little her grandmother vouchsafed to say, and she had, of course, quietly accepted her sole home as she found it, with the passive obedience of one accustomed to live with older people and to receive their decrees as final. But the rapid development of a nature of unusual strength had of late, with the unfolding of events, made her both anxious and curious.

As she walked slowly up-stairs,—and staircases are places for much thinking, — she said to herself, "My life is too unnatural; I am getting irritable; and how long through the years to come shall I be able to endure it?"

Pausing a moment, she made anew the resolution she had so often made before to be watchful of her temper, and then, with the caution of well-lessoned habit, knocked lightly at the door of Miss Octopia Darnell's sitting-room. After a moment she knocked again. Presently she heard, from within, a voice clear, distinct, and gentle: —

"I said 'come in,' Olivia."

The girl opened the door quietly. The room was darkened by partly-drawn curtains, and was luxuriously comfortable with a heavy-piled Turkish carpet and easy-chairs. On a long reclining chair, and covered with a silken down-lined coverlet, lay the long and attenuated figure of Octopia Darnell. She had the singular pale-golden complexion of a woman originally dark-skinned and now lacking blood. The nose was aquiline, and emphasized by the thinness of her cheeks. Her lids, large and full, were habitually half closed over watchful gray eyes, and her mouth, which was of remarkable beauty, was somewhat marred by the slight protrusion of the lips, as in the famous medals of the Malatestas. Her arms, extended languidly beside her, seemed from their delicacy unnaturally long, the hands were white and thin, and the fingers, with rather pronounced joints and pointed nails, were delicately cared for.

Without turning her head, she said, in modulated tones, —

"Why do you make so much noise, dear Olivia? And please not to keep me waiting, I am so weak to-day. You are young, dear, and death does not seem as near to you as it does to me. There! don't make so much noise. How your shoes creak! And don't stand about; it makes me nervous."

"I came to say that I must go out, Octopia" —

"*Cousin* Octopia," she corrected softly.

"Cousin Octopia," repeated Olivia, mechanically. "I have not been out for three days."

"Nor I, dear child, for, alas, how many! Don't desert me. I am so lonely, and the days are long, — very long."

"But it is unwholesome to be so shut up. I — I" —

"Read to me a little while; I want to hear the wretched war-news. And don't read the comments. You will be careful, love, won't you? I cannot stand what they say about the South. Happy you who have no stake in it all! And don't move about so. Why will you wear dresses that rustle?"

Olivia sat down, vanquished by the mixture of yearning claims on her feelings, distrust it as she might, and of more or less positive commands which long-enduring obedience made it hard to disobey.

She took up the "Herald," and began to look for the war-columns.

"I cannot see," she said. "My eyes pained me yesterday."

"Well," said Octopia, in a resigned and injured tone, "open the window a little; but put the screen behind me first, — first," she added, with impatience, "before you let in any more light." Then, in softer tones, "Thank you, dear child. How good you are!"

"No, I am not," said Olivia, raging inwardly.

"Oh, yes, you are; but don't speak so sharply. And now let us hear about General Lee."

For an hour Olivia read aloud, in a softened monotone, omitting with singular skill all editorial comments.

At last Miss Darnell raised her thin hand: "That will answer. You are a sweet child. Kiss me, dear; kneel down and kiss me. How good you are!"

This was a daily trial to Olivia. The close, ill-ventilated room, the obscurity, the sallow woman with a constant atmosphere of strong scents about her, were alike harmful to the very organization of the honest, wholesome maiden, and this final annoyance — the kiss and the little physical pettings — was becoming almost impossible to be endured. With a distinct effort to control the mutiny in her heart, she knelt hastily.

In a moment Octopia's long arms were about her. "Oh," she said, as she kissed the girl, "I have none but you near me to love me; you do love me, dear, don't you? You must, or you would not be so tender."

Olivia hastily released herself.

"That was rough, child. You forget I am an invalid."

"I am sorry," said Olivia. "I — I — my head aches; it is close here."

"I hardly see the logical relation of these matters. Don't go; I have something to say to you. You have been here such a little while. Open the window, if you must; I can stand it."

She had yielded so often to the sick woman's

plea of weakness, of loneliness, and of multiple disabilities, that the claim upon her sympathies had in time developed easily in one at the plastic age a habit of docile submission. It could not be said that she was ever unwilling; her momentary impatience was due to the craving of her physical nature for air and movement. All that was noblest in the girl made her incline towards tender helpfulness. Each revolt caused her intense self-reproach; for the soul of woman listens with impatience to the claims of the body, and Olivia was too young and unsuspicious to find in an analysis of the case before her reasons for doubt, disbelief, or refusals.

She sat down, showing the almost abnormal self-control observable in young women of decided character who have been brought up too largely among adults. Next, like a good honest martyr, she kindled a small fire of self-reproach, and began to torment herself because she had been on the verge of a denial of the god of self-sacrifice instinctively adored by good women.

As Olivia seated herself, she saw her cousin's long hands rising and falling on the coverlet, and said, gently, —

"You are suffering, cousin; can I help you?"

To an experienced eye the movements would have seemed too regular to be the expression of pain.

"Yes, I suffer; I cannot bear these struggles with you, Olivia. You are like all young people;

you have no real sympathy. When I am dead you will remember me and wish in vain you had done more to help a pain-broken woman. I don't want you to answer me; I cannot talk long, and I have something to say."

Olivia watched the sallow face, with its look of languid inaction, noticing for the first time, being a clever but undeveloped observer, that the lips spoke without the other features appearing to take any expressive interest in the thoughts thus uttered.

"Richard may be here any day this week, Olivia, or it may be that he will not come for a month or two. Everything is so uncertain now-a-days. I want you to be very nice to him when he does come. You will, love, won't you?" and she patted the girl on the knee caressingly.

Some faint instinctive warning rose in Olivia's mind. She could not have guessed at its source, but it steadied her and made her careful.

"How should I be anything else but nice to him? It will be a relief to see any one, — any one."

"Ah, but he is n't a mere 'any one,' — Richard Darnell!"

Olivia was a little puzzled how to reply, and returned, somewhat at random: "Is he like you, cousin?"

"He is better than I am, my dear child, a better nature. If he were like me I could not love him so dearly."

As she spoke, Octopia lay upon her back, and,

as was her habit, either looked up at the ceiling or talked with low-drooped lids that seemed to close the eyes but did not. Now she turned towards Olivia and took her hand.

"I want you to know him well, dear. We women understand one another, and can bear the weight of one another's aches and troubles; but men are more selfish, all but this man. I don't think Richard is selfish. There never was a moment when he did not want to be good to me."

With a sense of surprise Olivia recognized the thought which rose to her consciousness, that she might like this man better if he had been less good to Octopia.

"When will he be here? How can he come? He is in the Southern government service."

"Yes, dear. That brings me to what I want to say; and you must listen, because my brother's coming to the North is an errand full of risk. He comes on some business for the Confederate States, and of course he must do it under an assumed name. I have had a letter which came to me from the West Indies; you know that is the only way I can hear. In it he says that somewhere about this time he must visit the North, and that he will telegraph me from Philadelphia when he will arrive, and will sign with the name by which we are to know him. I think he has asked to be sent on this mission chiefly because he worries himself about me. Perhaps, too, he is a little curious as to his cousin, dear."

"I am not much of a curiosity," said Olivia, simply.

"What a quaint way you have of saying things! Ah, we shall see."

The tone of confidence was for some reason unpleasing to Olivia. "I hope," she said, "that you will be well enough to see him at once when he comes. If you have one of your bad days you will not be well enough to come down, and then I know you will leave him to me and to grandmamma. Half the time she is ill, and I may be left alone. It will be difficult for me; I shall make some mistake; I know I shall."

Octopia reflected a moment. She distinctly meant to throw these two young people together and to leave them to meet alone, feeling assured that the romance and peril of the situation would admirably aid the foolish scheme she had woven to interest Olivia in the Confederate.

"I shall be sure to see him," she said; "but everything will seem easy when you meet. However, we will talk it over again. I had to speak of it at once, because he may be here at any time. You must be very careful."

"Yes," said Olivia, thoughtfully.

"And bring me up those photographs of yourself."

"Why?"

"Because I want them, love. I did not like the one I sent last year."

"Why was I not told that you had sent him my likeness?"

"Oh, I forgot it, I suppose. It is quite possible he may not come at all, everything is so uncertain in the South; but I thought that if he chanced to come suddenly it would be as well for you to be prepared."

"And does grandmamma know it?"

"Of course, love. He has to go up from Richmond to the army and back again almost every month; but this time I surely think he will come."

It was all disagreeable to Olivia. She was strongly Northern in her feelings, and the need to repress them was one of her daily annoyances. The handsome Confederate official of whom she heard too incessantly did not much disturb her imagination.

"And now, like a good girl, run at once and get me the photographs. There were several. I want to choose."

"I have none to bring," returned Olivia, flushing. "I burned them."

"And pray why, dear, did you burn them? You knew I wanted them."

"I did not — no, I don't mean that. I burned them because I chose to."

"'Chose to!' You will have to learn that what your elders require should be law to a girl. 'Chose to,' indeed! I shall speak to your grandmother."

"As you please," said Olivia, rising.

"Yes, as I please. You will find it will be as I please."

Olivia stood still a moment, hesitating, an angry reply on her lips, and feeling that self-control was fast deserting her, left the room without a word.

Then she heard a wailing cry: "Olivia! dear Olivia!" The girl turned back reluctant, and reopened the door.

"Try not to trouble me; I am sick and irritable. And you will be kind to my brother. And shut the door gently, love. I can bear no more."

With an indistinct sense of having been altogether wrong and of having been also insulted, the girl went slowly down the staircase. Midway she sat down on a stair, and with her head in her hands began to sob. She well knew that the half-apology and tender remonstrance with which she had just been dismissed meant nothing, and that another stormy and to her inexplicable quarrel with her grandmother was before her.

The exactions of her nervous, sickly cousin were surely sapping the wholesome life of the younger woman, and as surely lessening her power of self-restraint. One moment her sympathies were called upon, the next her temper was tried by reproaches.

Presently she got up wearily and went to Mrs. Wynne's room. There she was told that the old lady was asleep; and glad of a release from a second task of reading aloud, Olivia dressed and hastened away to get the exercise which she found it so rarely possible to obtain.

Two years had gone by in the routine of unend-

ing tasks and as constant annoyances since Olivia, in deep mourning for her father, had found a home at least in name with her grandmother. She knew that Octopia had been sent for to take charge of her father's house during her own absence, and that her cousin had nursed him tenderly in his last illness. Gratitude might have influenced his mother, but as to this Olivia could but surmise, and all that she knew surely was that the feeble woman on the third floor contrived, by one means or another, to make her influence decisively felt by every one in their little household. At first her extreme softness of manner, her fondness for physical petting, and her love of Olivia's society were helpful to the orphan, abruptly brought out of a life of happiness into this mournful house. But soon the girl began to feel, though indistinctly at first, that she was expected to give more than she got. The alms-bag of tenderly importunate craving for expressions of love and pity was forever at hand. Her life was absorbed by Octopia, who directed her studies after a fashion, and who was supremely affectionate so long as there was no resistance; when that came, Octopia was hurt or nervous, or both, or else, when defeat was near, gave way to such distressing symptoms as commonly routed Olivia and made Mrs. Wynne too uncomfortable for continuous opposition.

CHAPTER VI.

"One day the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and worn by the serpent's tooth
The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked, —
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow eyed, and haggard cheeked —
Fronting her silent in the glass."

When Miss Wynne was fairly out of earshot, Octopia Darnell rose suddenly to her feet, with an easy grace not to have been suspected in the weak, who are usually ungraceful.

"That girl really exhausts me," she said, in explanation to herself of the energy of her own present action. "She has no consideration for ill health and dependency on others. But I am not quite dependent," she exclaimed, again at the endless task of explaining herself to herself. "It is she — it is they who are dependent."

The pride of power came abruptly into her face. She drew herself up, threw back her head, and stood in the dim light, alert, self-observant, before the long dressing-mirror. Charitable shadows flattered the thin and sallow face. Dark crescents beneath the broad eye-sockets served to bring sharply out the great extent of white in which the large dark-blue iris was set. Black

curls of hair cut short crowned the rather small head poised on a long neck above drooped shoulders. She was quick, in her excitement, to note the mystery of grace which all can see and none fitly describe. A fierce hope rose anew in her mind.

"I am better!" she cried, "I shall be well! I shall be as I was!"

She was the puppet of her moods, which obeyed like an automaton the wires pulled by her emotions. The mood of triumph was upon her, and reason was in abeyance.

"Judith! Judith! oh, Judith!" she cried.

At her call the gray-headed black servant appeared from the next room. The set, patient look of the wrinkled old face gave way to an expression of wonder.

"Ain't heard ye speak dat way dis year, Miss Topy. What 's come to ye?"

"How old am I, Judith?"

"Reckon ye knows pretty well."

"Answer me!" cried her mistress, turning and speaking more imperatively.

A look of malice flitted over the servant's face. "Ye might be about thirty, Missus."

"You know I am older; but I don't look it. I am stronger; I am looking better. Don't you think Dick will see that I am going to be well?"

Again a gleam of dull malice disturbed the set wrinkles of Judith's face. "De light ain't jus dat good for my eyes; dey 's a-gettin' old." And,

speaking thus, she moved to the window and drew aside the curtain with a hasty motion.

The grace of the figure at the glass was still there, but the illusion of outlines softened by the dimness was gone. The eyes set deep in their shrunken sockets stared, with sudden pathos of discovery, at the high-boned, sallow cheek, and the cord-like muscles of the neck. Octopia fell back from the mirror, feeble and shaking.

"I look like a corpse!" she said; "I am hideous as a ghost! Why did you do it? you hate me! Sometimes I am sure you hate me!" She turned on the impassive form of Judith, and seizing her by the arm, held her with a fierce clutch. "You shall be punished for this. You shall quit the house. I will make you a field-hand."

"Why, Missus, yo's a-gettin' off yo' head. I 's a free woman. Dar can't nobody boss me. You jes' lie down a bit and git it out of yo' mind dat dis is de old home."

Under any great stress of passion the sick woman was subject to these spells of unreason; Judith had seen them before.

Octopia stared about her a moment, and hastily swept a hand over her face, as if to brush away the cobweb daze of emotional confusion which had come upon her.

"I am very weak," she said. "Where am I?" and she fell on the lounge, while Judith stood quietly beside her. She had endured half a lifetime of petty torment, and some graver wrongs,

from the woman before her, but an inheritance of serfdom and abject years of habitual submission were too much even for the slow anger which sometimes rose as time made clearer to her the changed conditions of their mutual relation. Beneath it all there was still the dog-like attachment of an inferior nature, which is little disturbed by injury, and vaguely connects with a master the idea of essential material helpfulness.

"Should I git ye anything, honey?" she said. "I 's sorry I hurt ye; I don't go to."

Was there some flavoring remnant of old affection in her phrase? Was it but that habitual flattery which the nursing strong cast to the sickly feeble? Was it the mere tribute of a life of cringing? Who shall say?

"It does n't matter," said Octopia, languidly. "Nothing matters. You 're better than the rest. Listen to me; Master Richard may be here within a few days, as you know. He will have a false name; he will not be Richard Darnell to me, or to you, or to any one. Keep out of his way, or you will be letting it out somehow; and if you do, — ah, if you do, it may cost him dear. Do you understand, Judith?"

"Guess I see, Missus," returned the black, mysteriously. "Kind of spyin' out de land."

"Nonsense! While he is here he is not Richard Darnell; I have told you that over and over again. Don't forget it. Now, fan me."

For an hour the older woman stood by her,

steadily obedient, until at last, seeing that Octopia was asleep, she rose quietly and stood for a moment regarding the long, frail figure with a look which would have added little to Miss Darnell's comfort had she seen it.

"'Pears to me," said the black to herself, "I can't somehow git away from de ole feelin's. De things changes and de folks dey does n't."

CHAPTER VII.

"My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flower and fruit of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone."

For several days after the events described, things went on as usual with Olivia. The expected guest did not appear, and made no sign of coming; so that, what with worry — which in one's moral machinery is like sand in more material mechanism — and the struggle to get calm enough for the development of her purposes, Cousin Octopia became increasingly difficult to live with.

A share of the bothers of life, of its little trials and its wearying cares, may be good for mature women; but no one can tell what may be, even for them, an unwholesome overdose. Olivia, despite her years, lacked the robustness of developed character. She had lived almost entirely with her own sex; and that is good for neither man nor woman. Too constant demands upon the brain, the body and the emotions of the young soon or late bring about gradual but certain degenerative changes; duty gets to be morbidly emotional, or, in a lower nature, sullenly habitual, and the healthiest become irritable, or nervous,

and are fortunate if circumstance stirs them to open revolt or removes them from the malaria of the sick-bed.

Another week had thus passed by, when one morning Olivia, as usual, after ceasing her task of reading to her cousin, entered her grandmother's room.

To a stranger it would have presented, with its inmate, a sufficiently interesting picture. The furniture of a seaside New England home some generations old had been carefully brought with its possessor when she moved to New York. Antique furniture of Chippendale patterns stood against the walls. Claw-toed chairs with carved scroll and shell-work backs and dark-red morocco seats, polished mahogany tables, and a thin-legged spinet, — all seemed to belong naturally to the slight old lady who sat erect in an arm-chair near to the bright brasses which sustained and guarded a hickory fire. She was delicately small, and clad in a soft dressing-wrapper of snowy whiteness. Her features were thin, white, and indeed quite without the usual old-ivory-like aspect of age; but, although her eyes were clear, the many wrinkles, and especially the perpendicular markings of the upper lip and its slight elongation, told to the observant eye how many years must have left upon her face their unerring record. A fall of soft lace partly hid the forehead, and from under it fell white lines of hair. Her hands rested on her knees, and were gloved with the long

gauntlets of kid now again in fashion, and her arms were bare above them to the elbows, which emerged from the lace trimmings of her gown.

She was passively regarding a portrait by Copley on the further wall when her granddaughter entered. Eighty-five years of accumulated memories appeared to have supplied her with sufficient food for thought, since, except for the daily hour or two of the young girl's visits and reading, Mrs. Wynne seemed to prefer to be alone and unoccupied, save with the clock-like click, click of her knitting-needles.

She looked up as Olivia came in; a phantom of a smile crossed her face. She was still alive in intellect and memory, but, except for brief periods and under unusual excitement, she was no longer capable of profound emotional disturbance. Yet at present she had quite enough to trouble a person able to bring her feelings to a focus at which heat is possible.

"Come and sit by me," she said, in a clear, thin voice. "You need not read to-day; I have something to say to you."

Olivia sat down on a large cushion at her feet, and looked up with interest at the face which still carried in its refined outlines some pleasant reminder of the days when the name of Ann Wynne had been a toast at suppers and men had quarreled for her smiles.

The girl was a little curious. Her days went by without incident, and so slight a thing as her relative's words awakened her attention.

"What is it, grandmamma?" she said. "I am glad not to read; my eyes ache with reading to Octopia in the dim light, and I am tired, too."

The elder woman looked at her with more than usual care. "Where are my glasses?" she said, and, having adjusted them, again considered the girl's face.

"Why did you not tell me you were tired?"

"It would be of no use. I am always tired. I should not mind it so much if it did not make me cross."

"You seem to be as sweet-tempered a woman as need be. Do not think I do not see and know what you have to bear. I do not think Octopia means to be exacting, but she lives in herself and in her own little surroundings, and I suppose it is hard not to be selfish when a person has so little left in life. We must try not to be hard upon her."

"I do try, grandmamma. I try very much."

The tender tones of praise and recognition were so strangely new to Olivia that she suddenly broke into a passion of tears, and buried her face in her grandmother's lap.

"I cannot stand it!" she said. "I try to be good, and I get worse every day. I — I — sometimes I almost hate her!" she cried, looking up. "If I could go out and see other people, and be as I was when mamma was alive, I could bear it; I think I could bear it. What does it all mean? Why does she live with us?"

"That is a question you have asked me before, Olive. When your father came home he sent for her, and after he fell ill she nursed him most devotedly. She was homeless and poor. It cannot seem strange to you that she made herself dear to me, and that I wanted to help her."

"No; that seems to me right, grandmamma. But" —

"But what?"

"Why does she say so much about our debt to her? Why does she always have her own way? When I know I am right about something and try to insist, she hints at what we owe her. I don't think it is at all nice."

Mrs. Wynne was silent.

"And you told me last week that you could not help it. Why cannot you help it?"

"There are certain things, my child, which I am not able to explain to you. When you are older you can think and act for yourself; now I must think for you."

"But it does n't seem quite reasonable that she should think for me too. Is there any reason?"

"Yes; one which seems to me very strong. I cannot tell you what it is."

"Why, grandmamma, it seems to me as if you were afraid of Octopia!"

The old lady said nothing for a moment; then she returned, feebly, —

"If I can bear it, you can. Don't you think

she is very weak, Olive?" and she looked about her as if fearing to be overheard. "She may not live long."

It was strange to hear the thin, fading remnant of a woman calculating on another's death. It shocked the girl.

"I would not wish her to die," she said. "Oh, not that! It bewilders me, grandmamma; I can't see through it. If I only could know what it all means, I might try to bear it. Do you really want me to understand that — that she can make you do what she wishes?"

"Oh, she does not threaten me, child. How strangely you talk! How can I help it? It is so difficult to cross people who are nervous and feeble."

"Feeble! She feeble! She is strong enough. You think she will die; I do not. She is too wicked to die."

"Olivia!"

"Yes, I mean it. She is killing me by inches, and I can't help it. She is really ill, and she makes me feel that — oh, she makes me feel that I do not sympathize with her, and I do; but I hate her too. What is it she wants now? Is it about the photographs? I burned them, because no rebel spy shall have my picture."

"You burned them?"

"I did."

"I am sorry, my child. Let me say once for all what is clear to me as an old — a very old —

woman. There are reasons why you and I should try not to irritate Octopia, — reasons of kindness, and other reasons. If you cannot get on with her it will only make us both unhappy. For my sake and for your own, we must simply bide the chances of time. All I ask of you now is not to cross her."

"It seems strange to me. And will this go on and on?"

"My dear, I have lived through many troubles. Time goes on, and troubles stand still. Let us bear with patience what it has pleased God to send upon us." Then she leaned forward and caught the girl's face in her two thin, gloved hands. "There cannot be many more years left to me. When I am gone, do as you will; but leave me what peace is possible. I have seen all — all die, — my brothers, my children, their children, — all but you; and I have lived to see my country torn to pieces. Only one trouble has been spared me: that I have not yet had to endure. Wait; wait."

Olivia rose. "You shall not feel that my love has been wanting in this or in anything else. I will not help by ill-humor or impatience to make your life harder. I will never speak of this again. Shall I read to you now?"

"No; I am tired: I should like to lie down."

To say that the girl's mind was satisfied would be untrue. Despite her lack of knowledge of the great outside world, her natural intelligence made it plain to her that her grandmother's age and

growing infirmities of mind and body, and her morbid dread of all added discomfort, might unfit her to deal with any difficult moral problem. This belief robbed Olivia of the enterprise and decisiveness which tempted her to face a mysterious danger rather than rest in the uncomfortable ignorance of doubt. But attacks on the girl's affections too readily captured her heart, and any tender appeal to her sympathies left her, as in the present case, passive, if unconvinced. Now she began to see clearly for the first time, what she had often enough suspected,—that in some strange way Octopia kept her grandmother anxious. There was nothing left but to yield; and yet she felt that circumstances might occur which would make prolonged submission ignoble.

Octopia said no more of the photographs.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Ah! not for idle hatred, not
For honor, fame, nor self applause,
But for the glory of the cause,
You did what will not be forgot."

MEANWHILE, the weeks went by, and it was now a day in early May, yet there was no news of Darnell.

Octopia dined down-stairs with the old lady and Olivia. On such unusual occasions as this Mrs. Wynne said but little, and the meal was only broken by ill-sustained efforts on Olive's part to start some subject of common interest. As soon as it was over, Mrs. Wynne went silently to her bedroom, and, to Olivia's surprise, her cousin began to describe her old plantation life in Virginia; its gayety, its hospitality, its lavishness. The girl listened with a certain amount of attention.

"I think I should have liked it," she said. In fact, it seemed a pleasant contrast to the morbid existence in which her young years were wearing away.

"It will all come back, Olive," said Octopia, triumphantly, — "the old life, — and you shall go South with us and see it, too. Would it not be pleasant to rebuild the homestead and buy back

the lands our ancestors lost? You would be a great lady, with hundreds of slaves."

"Then I should free them," cried Olivia, with flashing eyes.

"Nonsense! you would only ruin them," returned Octopia, who was in a mood of rare good-humor. "You don't know the delight of having a dozen people to serve you at a word."

For a moment the younger woman did not reply. She had pretty clear ideas as to the war, and held her opinions decidedly, but her grandmother's injunctions were still in her mind, and she was disinclined to anger her cousin.

"Yet it would not be my home, after all," she said.

"It must be. We shall find you some Southern gentleman. Ah, you have no such men at the North, so gentle, so tender to women, so brave."

"And is Cousin Richard all that?" said the girl, smiling, and hardly knowing what else to say or how to keep up the talk, which had taken a turn she had known her cousin's talk to take often enough before, and which, for some reason, had become thoroughly unpleasant to the hearer.

"Dick is all, dear, that a Southern gentleman ought to be, and the best of brothers. He is like me, but better looking, — oh, much better looking," she cried, laughing. "Only wait till you see him, Olivia; you may think me silly, but wait till you see him."

"My experience of men is rather limited," said Olivia, with a little laugh not free from bitterness

"Yes, I know that you have given up everything to your grandmother, and to me; but there are brighter days in store for all of us, when Lee shall have done with this new man, Grant. They have tried a good many on Robert Lee; the end must be near."

The girl thought to herself that the service she had given was scarcely as free from hypocrisy as it might have been. "Hark!" she cried, glad of a diversion. "What is that?"

There was heard the noise of many feet in the broad avenue. It was a little incident — anything was an incident — in Olive's dull life.

"I must go and see," she added. "I *must* go and see;" and so saying, she ran to the window, threw up the sash, and looked out.

Octopia lazily adjusted her shawl about her thin shoulders, and, following Olivia, leaned forward to see what excited her cousin's curiosity. "More mudsills," said Octopia, scornfully. Olivia did not or would not hear. The evening air was soft as if it were June, and it was still light enough to see clearly.

A mass of men moving solidly in company front filled the wide avenue from curb to curb. Before them rode their colonel, almost a boy — scarce a sign of manhood on his lip — his left arm in a scarf-sling. Window sashes flew up; men and women looked out; crowds gathered on the doorsteps.

Something in the youth and bearing of the

wounded officer on his way back to the front touched the crowd. A wild cheer broke forth, and from all over the house fronts white kerchiefs fluttered. The young fellow let fall his reins and raised his cap — smiling as he bowed right and left. Then he passed slowly out of Olive's view, while her eyes followed him. The gleaming bayonets flashed in the lights, file on file, and, as they passed, the band broke out, while from the head of the column rang forth, in gathering volume, —

"John Brown's body lies a-moulderin' in de ground,
John Brown's body lies a-moulderin' in de ground,
John Brown's body lies a-moulderin' in de ground,
His soul goes marchin' on."

The vast chorus rose solemnly on the night air between the high houses. Olivia stood clutching the window-sill, stirred and trembling with a sense of sympathy and awe, as the steady tramp of the regiment died away and the thunder of its grim war song faded to a melody which rose and fell and at last was almost lost in the distance.

The girl drew a long breath, and stood a moment thinking of the death and pains, the agonies and the ruined homes, the tears and the sorrow yet to be, before that war-spent band should tread these streets again.

"God help them!" she said, still hearing at moments the more and more distant tread and the broken song. She smiled; a verse of the psalter she had said on the last Sunday at church came

into her mind, and she murmured it half aloud, with fervent application of its words, a storm of feeling in her soul, a choking in her throat: —

"Good luck have thou with thine honor; ride on, because of the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."

Then a sense of her own helplessness overwhelmed her, — the woman's lot of watching and waiting when action would be comfort. All her young and imaginative nature was being awakened by the slowly moving war and its catastrophes. To her cousin she dared not speak, and her grandmother avoided this subject as she shrunk from all others which were painful or annoying.

At last, overcome by her long-pent-up emotions, Olivia moved hastily away.

"Where are you going?" said Octopia. "Shut the window."

"Oh, the pity of it! the pity of it!" cried the girl. "When will it be over, Octopia?"

"You foolish child!" said Octopia. "They get paid for it; they are not like our poor people. And after all they are only what you are pleased to call blacks. You will have hysterics next."

Olivia looked at her steadily, a wild light in her eyes, her self-control quite gone.

"How can you talk so?" she cried. "They are men going to wounds and death. Were they South-born or North-born, I should at least pity

them. You have no heart for any sufferings but your own! — none! none! You are heartless!"

"I? I?" said Octopia, "I? — no heart?" She was honestly amazed at the charge. Intensity of attention to her own ailments had given them for her a dangerous capacity, and she was simply shocked that any one should fail to believe with her in their seriousness. "When," she added, "you have lived through such years of pain as mine, you will learn to feel for another's ills. If — if you knew what I have done for you, what I have saved you, you would get some real pity for sufferings which grew out of love for those who should seem dearest to you, and you would not insult me with this hostility to my brother's cause and mine. The day may come when you may bitterly regret it."

There was a singular resemblance to Rachél in the long, sallow, graceful figure which stood in somewhat theatrical pose facing Olivia; a resemblance with an unsaintly halo of caricature about it. Olive had seen a portrait of the great actress, and the oddness of the likeness in some way restored her self-command. Nervously distraught sick women are, in fact, apt to become dramatic; and Olivia had assisted at many such scenes; but this time the girl felt that there was somewhere in the play a deadly reality.

Once having crossed swords with a dreaded antagonist, to go on is as safe as to retreat. Olivia had begun to learn the uses of time in the matter

of emotional disturbance, and stood now facing the older woman without a word, while she set herself to a mood of calmness.

Could Octopia have realized the power with which the younger woman put the brakes on and brought her rising passion to a stop, she would have been singularly instructed as to the person she was educating into resistance. The girl's outward tranquillity amazed and irritated her.

"Why don't you speak, child? Don't you hear what I say?"

"Yes, I hear. You have said it before, — not quite as clearly, but plainly enough. What is it you have done for us? I am not ungrateful; I know I am not ungrateful; but I — I can't be thankful for what I know nothing about. You treat me as if I were a child, and I am a woman; and if I am not a clever woman I am not a fool, and I am sick of this life of mock-mystery."

"Ask your grandmother," said Octopia, softly. "She may tell you if she will, — if she thinks best."

"I have asked."

"And she will not tell you? Nor, dear child, can I; you must not ask me. There are things which it is best for us not to know. I get worried and say things I don't mean, and then I am sorry, Olive, because I love you always, even when I am cross. Now don't let us talk of it any more. Kiss me good-night; I must go upstairs."

"I can't kiss you to-night, Octopia."

"Why not, love?"

"Well, I can't. Don't ask me."

"How can you hurt me so, Olive? There! I knew you would upset me, soon or late." Her pupils dilated, and beginning to tremble, she threw herself on the sofa, with her hands extended in rigid spasm. "Send Judith, and go — go away; you have done enough."

Her distress and terror and pain were evident, and the glance of reproach she cast at her cousin was pitiful.

Olivia was disarmed, knowing well that these symptoms usually meant days of suffering for her cousin. She promptly called the old black woman, and, with wrath and pity and a hideous sense of puzzle in her mind, left the room and descended the stairs.

Suddenly her keen sense of humor, so much kept down by her surroundings, came to her aid. She remembered how her nurse used to play cat's-cradle with her until the child found her baby fingers tangled in a maze of thread which would not go off in orderly fashion on to the woman's fingers. She looked down now at her shapely hands and laughed.

"I 've got it on," she said; "how shall I get it off? Ah, if I only knew the truth!"

But the angel of mirth had somehow brought her mysterious comfort, — the angel of mirth, twin-sister of contentment.

Presently she was at rest in her sitting-room. With a resolute effort she put aside her discomforts of mind and turned to her sketching-table. Then she took up the evening paper, and was soon profoundly interested in the accounts of Grant's first movement across the Rapidan and his advance into the mazes of the Wilderness. At times, as she read the description of the war-correspondent at the front, she put down the paper and sat still, using her imagination to help her to realize the scenes portrayed.

At last her reverie was broken by the cries of the newsboys: "Great battle in the Wilderness! Hancock driven back! Grant about to recross the Rapidan!"

"Those horrible papers," she said: "they are never true. I shall wait till to-morrow."

She sat still, reflecting on what this grim chorus of the streets must mean to wife, mother, or child. It kept the war forever in one's memory, — at meals, in mid-morning, in the silence of midnight, at church. There was no escaping these persistent echoes from distant battle-fields.

At length she rose, and went up-stairs to bed. As she passed her grandmother's door she paused and knocked lightly.

The old lady was still awake, but was lying on a lounge, ready for bed.

"What is it, my dear?" she said, in her small voice.

"I have done wrong. I came to tell you that

I broke my promise to you, grandmamma. I have quarreled with Octopia. I will not do it again. I could not sleep until I told you. I am very sorry."

"That will not keep me from having another scene with her to-morrow. You cannot control yourself, and the consequences fall on me."

"I am sorry!" exclaimed Olivia.

"And why should you distress me about it to-night?"

"I thought it was right to speak."

"Well, well, go to bed now; and, for my sake, child, keep a better watch on yourself. Was she very angry?"

"Oh, I suppose so. It was about the war."

"Between you I have no peace."

"I think, grandmamma, that Richard Darnell's failure to come makes Octopia more miserable and more exasperating as to everything connected with the war. I never saw her looking worse."

"The more reason to be patient."

"Yes, I know that. But I am sorry he is coming. It does n't seem right that he should ask helpless women to keep his rebel secrets."

"I like it no better than you; but perhaps he may not come at all. I have often observed, dear, that sometimes things do not happen — and now go to bed; I am very tired."

CHAPTER IX.

"Nor could humanity resign
An hour which bade her heart beat high,
And blazoned duty's stainless shield,
And set a star in honor's sky."

EXCEPT for its influence on the fortunes of those involved in our tale, the war concerns us little. The great Northern soldier found himself checked at each effort to flank his wary opponent, and on the morning of the 7th of May began his march on Spottsylvania Court-House. Before him lay an undulating country dotted with pine groves, marshes, and forests; behind him, the Wilderness, in its tangled recesses an army of the dead, smouldering fires, mangled trees, deserted homes, shattered log-cabins, and here and there a hurt and helpless soldier, — in gray or blue, — lost in the dense undergrowth, moaning life away unheard, amidst torturing memories of home. On the agony of man and nature fell the silence of desertion as the cruel ruin of battles swept away to the eastward.

We follow the armies only to record an incident which gravely influenced the life of Roland Blake, as indeed each day and hour of the war must have told enduringly on the moral and physical constitution of every sensitive man in those great hosts.

Philip Francis was, like his old room-mate and friend, attached for a time to the provost-marshal's department, and was in command of a portion of the cavalry guard of that official. Blake's late assignment to duty in the bureau of information brought them anew into closer relations than had been possible while the latter was still in an infantry regiment. At Harvard accident had made them sharers in a sitting-room, and their acquaintance began with some mutual antipathies and a fair share of liking. The Philadelphian was attractive to the New England man by reason of a certain joyousness which contrasted with his own far graver nature. Both men had a happy sense of the humorous side of life, but with Blake, as with most men, it came and went, and rarely controlled him. For the other, life was a constant merry-making of the very soul, and humor was like an atmosphere within which all other moods seemed possible. At times it annoyed the calmer friend, just as his own tendency to a mystical manner of stating what was often simple enough comically exasperated Francis. Blake worked hard, and, as his friend said, "believed hard," and was anti-slavery to the core. At times they quarreled, and, like young fellows, would decline to speak to each other; but then, as Francis said, "That eternal grin of mine is a dreadful peace-maker; and I never had character enough to keep up a row."

The Philadelphia man left the bar to take up arms; he laughed at himself and his reasons, but

he was in fact honestly stirred by the sense of national insult and of his country's peril; his New England friend had hastened home from his broken studies at the School of Mines in Paris on a like errand; and now, older and more mature, the chances of war had brought them together again.

It was night, the 11th of May. Well to the rear of Hancock's corps, among the headquarter tents, a few camp-fires were burning among woods thinned by the axe. A heavy, sullen rain fell drearily through a fog which made of every object at a distance a grayish silhouette. Under the slight protection of a shelter-tent, before one of the fires, Blake and Francis lay on the ground, wet and tired out, and getting what consolation they might from their brierwood pipes.

"I told you we had come to stay," said Blake.

"Yes, by Jove, — a good many of us. Luckily, you and I have been out of the worst of it of late; but I shall get hit again to-morrow. I really think I must be personally attractive to bullets."

"That is your only superstition, Phil. Can't you believe in the truth of chance? It is a mere matter of luck."

"What are luck, and truth, and chance?"

"I think I could put them in the form of an equation for you, Phil. Now, luck is to time as" —

"Please don't," said Francis, kicking at one of the smouldering logs; "there 's mist enough outside to-night. When you begin to be metaphys-

ical I always feel like a steamer in a fog, and as if the only thing left for me was to anchor and blow a fog-horn."

Blake laughed. "In old days we should have ended in a row. Do you remember how at last we agreed to put on the gloves every Friday morning to settle the week's disputes?"

"Don't I? And I always got licked, — just as I always get hit nowadays."

"Nonsense! Let 's go to bed. I hope I shan't dream again about that scoundrel who shot me. I do not see why he haunts me as he does. It would be odd if I should ever meet him again."

"Somebody else is a little superstitious to-night. Perhaps it 's catching."

"What is it, orderly?" The aids of the general in command were all off on duty, and as usual, any unemployed officer of the provost-marshal was called upon in the emergency.

"You won't be bothered with dreams to-night, Roland," said Francis laughing as they rode away to carry orders to various corps commanders.

Returning wet and weary at midnight, Blake saw the dark masses of Hancock's corps tramping silently out of their intrenched lines through a dense gray fog. At dawn a fury of musketry broke forth at the front, where Hancock was sweeping over Ewell's works. The two young men were kept busy all day providing for the security of the prisoners taken in the morning. Meanwhile, the doubtful battle raged with ceaseless vehemence.

Towards evening Francis received a hasty order to take three companies of the provost's guard to the front as reinforcements. Blake asked leave to join the party, as for the time his duties did not detain him. Receiving permission, he hastily rejoined his friend.

A short march through dense woods and mud brought them into a position indicated by an aid. It was for the time out of danger, and Blake, despite his experience of war, began to look about him with the interested curiosity which never left him. Before them rose a little elevation, from which the ground fell away to the front; behind them, from a still higher eminence, a number of guns were throwing shells over our lines into those of the rebels, who were replying in like fashion. The earth was covered with the early green leaflets, twigs, and branches, mowed by bullets which flew in constant flight overhead. The whoop and scream of shells and the howl of solid shot made a chorus wild as the orchestra of hell, and now and again the increasing fire of small arms added the whir and whistle of their balls to the tumultuous din of war.

A half hour later an order to advance to the top of the slope carried them forward under fire. Francis watched his men anxiously as they fell into line on the summit of the hillock, aware that some of them had seen but little service. Meanwhile a fragment of a brigade passed by them, having fallen back in order to renew its ammunition.

The infantry men chaffed the dismounted troopers as they passed.

"Steady!" said Francis, with his ever-ready smile, — "steady!" and Blake moved along the line, talking to the men, and keenly observant.

Still the leaves and branches dropped as from unseen scythes in air, and about them the bullets flew, now with a dull thud on the trees and now with a duller sound on limb or trunk of man. A half-dozen men dropped in as many minutes, and, as usual, the soldiers began to tend into groups, with some instinctive sense of obtaining protection by neighborhood to their fellows.

"Steady!" said Francis; "mark time! Now, again! That 's better!"

The signs of nervous excitement were visible enough: one man incessantly wiped his gun-barrel, another buttoned and unbuttoned his coat, a third stood, pale and tremulous, looking hastily to left and right, whilst a tall soldier attracted the attention of Blake by talking volubly.

"Now, steady!" said Blake, facing them and marking time as he stepped backward. "So! That will do. Now forward — double quick!"

They passed the torn abatis and slashes which before dawn lay in front of the rebel lines and now within our own, and in a few moments were at the front, behind the breastworks to the left of the murderous "Angle." Kneeling in double rows, they took the places left vacant by a part of a regiment sent back in turn to replenish its cartridge belts.

The "Hot Corner" to the right and the adjoining lines, which Lee had lost at dawn, had been furiously contested in repeated charges all that long day of May. But now for a brief season there was a respite.

The firing ceased a few moments after they reached their station, and Blake had leisure to observe the effect of the most ferocious struggle of the war. The lines were straight to left and right, but to the westward of where he stood was the "Hot Corner," better known as "the Angle." Its open side looked towards the rebel lines. Originally a well-built breastwork, it had been continually strengthened as chance allowed, and was now a mass of earth, tree-trunks, and rails. The woods were dense on each side, and in them during the brief pauses in this awful day the combatants of either side lay close to the disputed barrier. Blake walked down the lines to the left crouching low to avoid a shot. Before him lay a broad clearing, and twelve hundred yards distant a thick wood, which sheltered the rebel lines and ran towards and up to the bloody angle. The smoke lifted slowly, as if reluctantly unveiling the countless wounded and dead in the open. The dusk was gradually deepening. For an hour or two there had been no serious assault; yet those who had met the gallant Confederates knew but too well their habit of a final and desperate onset just before nightfall. Officers came and went, ammunition was distributed, tired men rose from brief repose, new bri-

gades came up, and a relative stillness of grim expectation fell on the close-set lines behind the torn field-works. Then there was stir and movement in among the distant woods. Forms of men dimly seen filled the dark interspaces of the far-away forests across the clearing, and swarmed out of them until long gray lines, one behind another, in close formation, told to those who watched them what was coming.

Standing behind Francis's men, glass in hand, Blake awaited the onset. His friend passed him, smiling as ever. The gray lines grew nearer, advancing slowly; the officers well in front, marking time, then pausing and at last falling into and behind the moving mass. Then they came faster. Just in front of Blake a single officer, in a gray shirt and without a coat, kept his place before his men. The long gray line, five hundred yards distant, broke with wild yells into a rush; a fury of musketry burst forth at the angle to the left in the denser woods; officers cried out, "Keep cool! Steady! Hold your fire!"

Blake dropped his glass. Francis cried out to him, "Get down, you fool!" As he crouched he saw the now irregular line, and even the set, grim faces of the men, — earth has seen no braver.

Then the fury of fire and smoke began, — an inconceivable tumult of shouts, cries, oaths, the ping-ping of minie and musket-shot, and a darkness of gray death-mists flashing venomous tongues of fire. Through torn smoke-veils Blake saw the

near faces, black and furious. Of the awful struggle, as men were shot, stabbed, pulled over as prisoners to either side, beaten down with clubbed muskets, he knew little that he could recall a day after. There was a pause, confusion, wild shouts, hurrahs, to left and right, a sense of having won, — he knew not how or why, — and he found himself leaping down from the top of the breastwork with an amazed sense of victory, in his left hand an empty revolver, still smoking, in his right a broken musket. He drew a long breath, and, perfectly exhausted, looked about him. He was unhurt. Around him were prisoners, dead and wounded soldiers, men afoot tottering, men on the ground convulsed, and a mere mob of smoke-begrimed soldiers, with alert officers swiftly moving to and fro, swearing, and howling orders in an effort to get their people together.

The smoke lifted or blew away, and Blake stared half dazed at the broken columns melted to a mob on the plain, some staggering, some crawling away wounded, some in broken groups, the greater mass huddled together and making for the sheltering forest.

The fight was over; but not a hundred yards distant the colonel who had led the immediate attack was seen in the dusky twilight walking calmly and scornfully away. As he became visible, shots went by him. Then a soldierly emotion touched some heart as brave as his own; an officer leaped on to the breastwork and called out, "Damn it, don't fire! Three cheers for the Reb!" A

wild hurrah rose from the Northern line. Whether the officer concerned understood it or not were hard to say, but he wheeled suddenly, faced our breastworks, saluted formally as if on parade, and again turning, renewed his walk, while cheer on cheer thundered along our lines.

Blake raised his field-glass and watched him. Suddenly he saw him sway, recover himself, and then, doubling up, drop on the ground.

"My God, how pitiful!" exclaimed the New England man.

It was now getting darker; but Blake noted well where he fell. Victory is only less confusing than defeat. Threading his way through the thickly-lying dead and wounded gray and blue, — for thrice the Confederates had been within the captured lines, — he moved slowly along among perplexing masses of intertangled brigades and regiments in search of his friend. At last, returning, he found Francis. They shook hands warmly. Both felt the immense sense of relief which the close of a battle brings to the bravest.

"Well, old man," said Blake, "so you 're clear this time. So much for presentiments! Did you see that rebel colonel? I mean to have a look for him."

"Nonsense, — you would never find him, — come and help me. We have lost awfully. Some of the men got over in the rushes and are lying hurt outside. Let us try to get my people together; it will be dark in a half hour, and I may be able to bring in some of my own poor fellows."

CHAPTER X.

"She sees with clearer eyes than ours
The good of suffering born, —
The hearts that blossom like her flowers,
And ripen like her corn."

Drum and bugle rolled out rallying notes; the stretcher-bearers went through the woods with their sad loads; some of the wounded limped along, or used a comrade's aid; axe and spade were again at work on the field-works. Everywhere through the woods officers went and came in almost hopeless efforts to remake the regimental organizations, while the men, literally exhausted, lay resting in broken lines, or in groups, comfortable over their individual escapes and the day's results. Meanwhile the rain fell steadily, and a dark fog lay on the open like a winding-sheet over all that awful space between the forest shelters of blue and gray.

As if by common consent the firing ceased entirely, — a truce without verbal agreement, that the hurt of either side might get relief. As night fell, single men and small details began to creep out on to the field, to bring in their wounded comrades. After helping his friend to look for the hurt of his own command, Blake waited for a time, and then, mingling with the ambulance-men

and the more venturesome soldiers, moved slowly out on to the clearing. His emotional admiration of the act of courage he had seen, and his pity at the tragic ending of it, stirred all the romance of a nature to which life had brought small chance for its practical development. He wondered a little at the despotism of the impulse which urged him to an act of sentimental rashness; but the poetic side of a very complex character now and then asserted itself in Blake and for a time thrust aside all coarser considerations. He had a theory that every man knows himself in reality; yet these romantic insurrections were more or less a surprise to him. A man is most himself when he feels, and the young soldier might have had some indistinct knowledge that these soul-stirring moods were revelations to the man of his nobler self.

He had concluded that the officer was beyond help from his own people, and too far to be easily aided by ours, and he was resolute to see what he could do for him.

He looked about him, bending low as he went, to avoid notice, quite aware that he was disobeying rules. The darkening mass of the Federal wood line was hardly more visible than the distant shelter of the Confederates. The rain fell drearily, and a mixture of strange odors rose through the fog from the sodden soil. Thick around him lay the dead. Save in the awful railway-cut at Antietam, he had never seen before literally heaps

of fallen men. Here and there one of these piles moved visibly, as an arm or leg was thrust out, while, between the far-away hum of life in the two lines, from over all the open space where he stood faint cries and groans rose and fell.

This monstrous mass of unrelievable suffering overwhelmed the young man with a sense of horror which for a moment gave him the desire to escape it by flight. He stopped and steadied himself. He had "lined" the spot where the rebel fell, by the aid of a pine-tree which rose far above the Confederate woods. Sure that he must be near to the place he sought, he began to look about him with more care. When on the point of giving up in despair, he heard a voice near by, and the abrupt sound of a natural human utterance startled him: —

"Halloa, there! Who are you?"

"A friend, whoever you are," said Blake, moving towards the sound. A man, but not the one he sought, was lying against a tree stump.

By this time Roland had come to a sense of the failure of his romantic quest. He was about to be hustled by the vigilant police force of common sense, with flourish of the bludgeon "I told you so."

"Then tie something round my leg," said the soldier. "I am hit, and I think I am bleeding to death. I can't check it."

The young captain, like other sensible line-officers, had taken pains early in the war to learn

something of the surgery of emergencies. In a few moments he had secured his handkerchief on the leg, and with a broken fragment of a branch from a low bush had so twisted it as to arrest the flow of blood.

"That will hold, but perhaps not long," he said.

"Then I am done for. I am too far from our lines to crawl in or be looked after."

"I can carry you into our own works," said Blake, who was getting a little interest in the gentle-voiced Confederate.

"By George! if you only would! Betwixt death and a prison I select the least evil. I am getting dizzy. Make haste, please. If I die, will you see that my sister gets my watch? My name is Darnell, — Richard Darnell." He spoke faintly.

Blake rose. The voice had puzzled him. Now he knew. His doubt was at an end. To leave this man would be an act of revenge. He stooped down, raised him, and at last got him on his back, and staggering in the dark over dim and grewsome piles of the slain, approached our lines, where the stretcher-bearers were busy with the wounded.

With some difficulty he found a blanket and two men to aid him, so that within a half hour he had his prisoner at one of the field-hospitals in the immediate rear of the division. An assistant surgeon known to Blake was secured with some trouble, and it was then found that a ball through

the thigh had done the mischief, and that the man was slowly bleeding to death. The vessel was tied, the wound dressed, and aided by a little brandy, the rebel at last opened his eyes, and in an hour or more began to take in some idea of his surroundings.

"Where am I?" he said, at last.

"Never mind," said Blake. "Here, drink this soup." And then, seeing his uneasy restless look, he thought best to explain to the hurt man that he was a prisoner and would be well cared for.

"I begin to remember. Some one carried me in. I am awfully hazy about it. Was it you?"

"Yes, it was I."

"Don't talk any more," said the surgeon, as Blake stepped aside. "You 've hardly got blood enough left to keep the quietest life a-going. Captain Blake brought you to the ambulance; that 's all I know about it. You are a pretty lucky fellow, I think. Another half hour or so would have finished you. Here is your handkerchief, Blake. Scarce article, — best to take it."

Roland turned back, took it, and said, "Good-by."

"Thank you," returned the Confederate. "You 'll see me again, won't you?"

"All right," said Blake, moving away. After walking rapidly for a few minutes he suddenly noticed that he was absently carrying the blood-stained handkerchief. He paused at a smouldering camp-fire, and cast it into the embers with

a look of utter disgust, and then strode away hastily into the woods. The exaltation of his mood was over, and he began to know, as he had oftentimes known before, that if he continued to dwell on the matter what had but now seemed to him a rather chivalrous duty might assume less romantic aspects. He was apprenticed to the very practical trade of war. What he had done was none of his business.

Having got thus far, he became annoyed at himself, determined to keep quiet about the matter, and, mentally declining to reconsider it further, turned to look after his thick-coming duties.

The next morning he received a little note, scrawled in pencil on an envelope, to this effect: —

DEAR ROLAND, — Hurrah for presentiments! A stray bullet has reinforced my beliefs. I am in the division hospital at the rear, under old Upton's care, with a little minie-ball as a tender souvenir of the very attentive Johnnies. It was a spent shot. It is in my porte-monnaie this morning, and was in my side last night. By luck or chance, it went round in place of through.

There is a handsome fellow near me who says an officer named Blake carried him into our lines last night. Seems a queer story. Was it one of your eccentricities? The man says he was in the rebel camp on civil duty, and volunteered, like a jackass (the phrase is his, but I quite agree with him), and that his name is Richard Darnell.

I am off, invalided, for the North, if they can get transportation, this A. M. I am glad enough. Any man who says he loves fighting is like that traditional individual who says he does n't like sweet champagne. Good-by, in case you can't get over here. I may say that Johnny Reb goes along. I like him, rather.

Yours, presentimentally, PHIL.

It was night before Blake found a moment's leisure to reconsider the startling incident of the last day. Then he read Francis's note anew, and took counsel of a pipe.

The scoundrel, now a helpless prisoner, had been officially in relations with him which utterly forbade his denouncing him as out of the pale of protection of the laws of war, — a double traitor. He had given the man a pledge of secrecy, and would keep it. It was clear that the spy had not recognized him, and, as he well remembered, he had, for some reason or no reason, recoiled from mentioning his own name during their brief interview. And now, by a strange fate, he had saved this man's life. Blake strode up and down before a dismal camp-fire, at one moment interested by the romance of the situation, at another reflecting with disgust on what he should say if ever this rascal should chance to thank him for the life he had saved. Here was a manner of Frankenstein to whom he had given at least a fresh lease of existence. Then he smiled at the quaint notion

of responsibility thus brought before him. There was clearly nothing to do but to let the villain pass out of his life. What bewildered him was the combination of gallantry with treachery, of the darkest dishonor with that reckless courage which finds some joy in peril.

"I would give a great deal to forget it all," he said to himself, "but I shall remember it as one does a bad nightmare."

The dark tide of war swept down to the Appomattox and away to the trenches in front of Petersburg before Blake was enabled to rejoin his regiment. Meanwhile, he heard from Francis occasionally to the effect that he was slowly regaining his health, which had been rudely shaken by his frequent wounds.

On Christmas Day Blake wrote thus: —

DEAR PHIL, — Since I found delight as a small boy in mud pies and in breaking things, which seems to be an elementary instinct, I have never seen mankind in a condition for so favorably indulging these tastes as we have been in this December. I went down with Warren on a bloodless riot of destruction along the Weldon Road. The country was one vast mud-pudding. It was curious to see men take pleasure in ingenious destruction. This ruin of the knitting bonds of useful intercourse, the tumble of telegraphs, the wreck of rails fire-twisted to uselessness, seemed to me more barbarous than killing

men. But I am only half soldier, and at times half woman, I believe. Now and then the pure misery of it all overfloods my soul, and I find no refuge save in dogged return to practical duty. I suppose the every-day-world life must thus overcome the too tender. I hear you laughing out the wholesome bitters of merry contempt at my self-analysis. Some of us have to be always shifting ballast to keep on an even keel. Pity such.

That man Darnell has been too much in my mind. Did you see any more of him? Where is he?

It is a dreary Christmas-day, and I sit alone, awfully blue, writing to you, who are almost my sole friend since my uncle's death this fall. Keep me near you in thought at least. I please myself like an imaginative girl with the idea that you are not forgetful of me to-day. I don't say much of my affection for you, although one forgets one's Anglo-Saxon shyness on paper. I confess with freedom to that pure priest, a white page.

Good-by. R.

P. S. — My old Chickahominy malaria is at me again. It is punctual enough to be morally instructive.

Philip had that devoted admiration for Blake which men of his character sometimes have for a larger-minded man whom they cannot always entirely comprehend. He was at present puzzled a little as to Blake's interest in Darnell, but any

wish of the former was sacred, and accordingly he ascertained, after much letter-writing, that the Confederate gentleman was recovering from his wound and was a prisoner at Fort Delaware. Presuming then that Blake would desire further to aid the man whose life he had saved, he wrote with characteristic good nature to the surgeon at the fort, an old acquaintance, forwarding a letter to Darnell with some money and a supply of books and small luxuries. Before long he received a courteous reply and a warm note of thankful acknowledgment to Blake and himself. Upon this he wrote briefly to his friend, inclosing the note and asking Blake if he would like him to go to Fort Delaware and see the prisoner.

To his great amazement, he heard promptly from Roland in a fashion that astonished him and was almost too great a trial of his unconquerable sweetness of disposition. Blake wrote: —

"I had a natural desire to hear something of Darnell. I have not the slightest wish to cultivate any nearer acquaintance with him. One's interest in a man may be of various kinds. I had some form of it in the miserable wretch I saw shot for desertion yesterday. I cannot make clear to you my reasons, but I never wish to see your rebel again.

"Confound the chills! I suppose we shall move again soon. I am dreadfully weary of war and especially of the unthinking obedience it entails on any one who desires to do his full duty as

a soldier. Sometimes I feel as if I should never again be my own master, or recover entirely my sense of freedom. I am thankful that the end is near; and near it is despite the croaking editors at the North. How are you getting on, and when shall we smoke another pipe together?"

"Well, upon my word," exclaimed Francis, "I am like Paul Pry. I shall certainly never do a good-natured thing again. It must be the chills. Poor old Roland! I should like to be able to understand it. It is altogether so unlike him." And with this he dismissed the matter, and, concluding not to write to his friend for a few days, went to New York on an errand of business for his father, an active and prosperous merchant in Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XI.

"Were there one so lost as to pray the fiend to keep him from temptation to do good, be sure some woman would still love him."

AFTER his not unwilling capture, Richard Darnell lay for the months of June and July in hospitals before he was finally well enough to be taken to the prison for Confederates at Fort Delaware. His condition embarrassed him. As a civilian, no one was interested in his exchange, and he might lie here until the war was over. While in hospitals he was well and even luxuriously cared for, but at the fort, although he had small cause of complaint, the confinement within the island space chafed him sorely.

Towards the end of August he felt himself quite well again. Up to this time he had not written to Octopia. He knew that she must have been constantly expecting to see him; but this had been the case over and over when from time to time his errand had been postponed for one reason or another connected with the affairs of the Confederate government. Now that he was less agreeably situated, he began to reflect that his sister would be uneasy at his long silence, and that possibly the Wynnes and her friend Mr. Pennell might be able to make things more pleasant for him, or to secure his release.

At this time a plot was formed by the rebel officers to seize the fort with the aid of the thirteen thousand men confined like themselves on the island. It was discovered in time to prevent a temporary success and the horrible loss of life which would have followed. Many officers were sent away to the West, and the surgeons and civilian prisoners were confined to the casemates, and, amidst other restrictions, all correspondence was put an end to, so that until November Darnell was unable to communicate with Octopia.

When at last she heard from him it was with some sense of relief. He was nearer now, and free from danger. Mr. Pennell exerted himself in vain to procure his exchange or to mitigate the annoyances of a captive's life. The rebel gentleman had proved a perverse and dangerous prisoner, his temper and recklessness having led him into constant conflict with the rules of war.

Then at last he resolved to escape, — a difficult task, but not easily set aside by a man who dreaded nothing so much as the continuance of confinement.

Meanwhile, Octopia, despairing of his release, was wretched, and turned more and more for comfort and help to Olivia.

It was now January. One morning early she sent in haste for Olivia, who found her flushed and excited, for once forgetful of herself.

"Olive! Olive!" she said, "shut the door. Shut both doors. Sit down. I have had a tele-

gram from Dick, from Baltimore. It is signed 'Richard Wynne;' so that I am sure it is he; he must have escaped. I knew those cowardly Yankees could not keep him if he meant to get away. He says he will be here to-night at seven. Oh! are you not glad?"

Olivia said she was glad. "But what a risk," she added, "to come North now!"

"What Darnell ever feared risk, dear?"

That he was selfishly compromising his cousins did not suggest itself to Octopia.

"And what can we do with him?" said Olive. "He can't stay here."

"Oh, he will take care of himself. I am so glad to have you know him."

She saw in anticipation the manly figure, the lustrous, seeking, restless eyes.

"I am afraid," said Olive rather disconsolately, "it will worry grandmamma almost to death."

"Dear love, think what it is to me to see Dick! Cousin Anne will be kind to him, I know. She can't help liking him."

"I suppose it must be," said Olive. "I will tell her, and we will do our best. I wish he were in the South. It would be safer and better."

"Safer, perhaps, — not better. You think too little of others, Olive. You are sometimes very hard for a girl so young as you."

"I do not mean to be. But indeed I hate these endless mysteries."

Octopia seemed not to hear her. She flushed

proudly as she thought of her brother, a man to whom danger was attractive, liking power as his sister liked it, somewhat feared by the mass of his fellows for the recklessness of his character, — a man of many wants, loving luxury, and with more heart than conscience, — Octopia admired him much, thought she knew him well, loved him intensely, dreaded him somewhat.

"I shall dine with you," he had written, "about seven to-night. If I do not come by seven I shall be with you to-morrow."

"Ah, I am hardly up to dining at seven. He shall dine alone with Olivia," she thought. "There is nothing like first impressions, and Dick knows how to make himself agreeable enough, when he chooses;" and she smiled. "Olivia would make him a good wife if I were about to keep her in order."

"If I have been cross to you of late, Olive," she said at last, "you will forgive me, love. I think it will cure me to see Dick. You won't forget that he is to be Richard Wynne?"

Olive wished he had chosen another name. The matter was simply hateful to her from every point of view. Then, noting her silence, Octopia added, —

"You will find it easy enough, you can speak of him as Cousin Dick."

This did not seem quite so simple to the younger woman. Octopia and he were not nearer to her than the third degree of cousinship, and while

long familiarity seemed to have brought his sister close enough, Olivia felt that the case of the man might wear a very different aspect. There was, however, some novelty in the prospect of a new acquaintance, and she went about all day with a sense of annoyance and expectation.

The grandmother scarcely ever dined downstairs, and Octopia so rarely that when, late in the afternoon, Olivia received by her cousin's maid a note stating that Octopia did not feel well and must postpone seeing her brother until after dinner, the younger woman felt little surprise, but more annoyance. These notes on the smallest occasions were a part of the trivial incidents of Octopia's life; and whenever she desired to settle a matter without chance of appeal, she resorted to the device of a note. Olivia smiled as she read it, and, aware that her cousin always had an unstated motive in the background, awaited the dinner-hour with a quiet little resolution to be on her guard, hardly conscious, however, of what she was to fear, but more and more distrustful.

CHAPTER XII.

"A woman sweet nor yet complete."

"The wingless hopes of maidenhood are hers,
And childhood's coy delight in simple things."

On the afternoon of the day early in January which had brought Octopia news of her brother's probable visit, Philip Francis strolled up Fifth Avenue somewhat after seven P. M. His wound had healed, and he was thinking without excessive delight of the fact that a few weeks longer must find him again in the army. But to-day was his own, and for Francis the joy of to-day was always more pleasantly sufficient than its evil. He was in evening dress, and wore a rather light overcoat, as the day, though cloudy, had not been cold. He had but a few blocks to walk to the house of a newly-married friend who lived on the avenue, and with whom he was to dine.

Feeling some drops of rain, he hastened his pace, but was caught presently in a chilly downpour. He looked about him for shelter. The night was fast gathering, and cabs were not as plenty on Fifth Avenue as they are to-day. He pushed on, smiling as he reflected upon the calmness with which one took a ducking on the Rapidan, and how grave a hardship it became on Fifth

Avenue to a man in evening dress and a thin overcoat.

The numbers were difficult to see, but at last he ran up the steps in a yet heavier flood of rain, and with a pull at the bell, took refuge beneath the shallow doorway. A man-servant opened the door, and Francis hastily stepped in, his first idea being that of escape from the rain, which was falling in volumes.

The servant remarked, "You 're quite a bit late, sir. Miss Olivia 's been a-waiting 'most a half hour."

Francis hesitated a moment; clearly he was in the wrong house. He could not be the expected guest. He was about to ask if Mr. Vincent lived there, when the servant continued, —

"Miss Olivia is down. There won't be no one else to-day."

It seemed simple enough to go out, if, as now became yet more certain, he was not in the house he sought, and which he knew boasted of no young women. But there was the rain. The absurdity of the situation amused him.

On entering, he had resigned his wet overcoat and hat to the servant. Standing irresolute for a moment at the entrance to the drawing-room, he began to take in its evidence of feminine pursuits, and was attacked with an uncomfortable sensation of the coming embarrassment of explaining to a total stranger the circumstances by which he had been led to seek a refuge. "By

George!" he said, aloud, "how it rains! It's worse than Virginia."

So saying, he was about to turn towards the hall door, when he was suddenly met by the apparition of a handsome well-dressed woman who came in from the back room and said, with a curious gravity of demeanor, "What's worse than Virginia?" Then she paused, as if surprised, and the servant walked away.

The man before her was clean-shaven, and, if a little pale, was frank of face and merry-eyed. It was a pleasant surprise.

"I should apologize," he said, hastily. "I am drenched."

"Not at all," she broke in, interrupting him; and then, with a quaint little stiffness of manner which betrayed embarrassment, "Cousin Richard Darnell is welcome, — most welcome."

In truth, she was interested and excited, and also somewhat shy, as was natural in one so young who had lived so long in almost monastic seclusion.

If she was a little bewildered, Mr. Francis was hardly less so. The sweet intelligence of a face which obeyed now the heart and now the mind, the gentle primness due to absence of youthful society, and also perhaps to some more or less unconscious imitation of her grandmother's courtly formality, combined with the false position in which he had placed himself to disturb him. He had a slight attack of what might be called social

vertigo, — a trivial general disturbance of moral equilibrium, too surely productive of physical awkwardness. Then the name Richard Darnell fell upon his ear with a sudden shock which completed his discomfiture.

"I — I beg pardon," he said, "I — I am not Richard Darnell. I am Philip Francis, of Philadelphia;" whereupon, to his amazement, the young woman went past him hastily and shut the door, saying, as she did so, —

"Oh, yes, yes; I understand. I ought not to have called you by your name, and you have made it very confusing. It was imprudent; but then these plots, these mysteries — oh, I hate them! I loathe them! Pray do not tell Octopia. But I don't think the man heard me," and she glanced uneasily down the hall after the retreating servant.

During this brief outbreak of excited statement Francis tried in vain to stop her by a lifted hand and a word or two, by way of an explanation which was becoming to him, at least, painfully necessary. Olivia's alarm and her eagerness to excuse her imprudence defeated him.

"We will not tell," he said, feeling dreadfully foolish. "But really," he added, "you must allow me to" —

"But I don't mean what I said as to Octopia. I would rather have you tell her. I hate mysteries."

"Then you will kindly permit me to end this

one," he said, standing before her and feeling how difficult any explanation had become. "I am Philip Francis. I got into your house by mistake, having meant to dine with a friend who must be your neighbor. The rain made me hesitate a moment, and then you came in, and — I am well aware it is my fault, but Richard Darnell is not my name; although I believe that I know him."

He was instantly sorry that he had added the last phrase.

The face before him made quick record of the trouble within.

"What an idiot I am! What a fool!" she exclaimed. The coincidence seemed to her intolerable without explanation. "No, sir, you cannot go — you shall not go, without telling me more," she cried. "No, I don't mean to be rude; but what are you? Where did you know my cousin? Where is he? It is not possible that you can be a spy?"

"I am so very sorry!" exclaimed Francis. "Pray let me explain! What I told you is strictly true; and as to the gentleman you named, and with whom I have had the honor of being confounded, I know very little of him at present, except that he was quite well a week or two ago, and that he made a very daring escape from Fort Delaware three days since. Where he is now I do not know."

"Fort Delaware! Escaped!" she said. "Yes, I know; of course."

Her inexperience at times betrayed her, and what she had seen of her own little world was not very reassuring as to the trust to be reposed on the beings outside of it, but when her sympathies were not too much involved she was intellectually decisive by nature, and she was fast maturing. The man before her was a gentleman; that, at least, was plain. He could not be a foe: his embarrassment and anxiety were as distinct as her own.

As Francis would have phrased it, she pulled herself together, and added, "It is vain now to conceal from you that my cousin, — a distant cousin" — "Why the deuce does she say that?" thought Francis — "has been expected by us. I have been incautious enough to let you understand that he may be here to-night. I do not say he will be; no one knows. What I see is that I have been a fool and have put him in the power of a total stranger. We are at your mercy." Her eyes filled and her cheeks flushed as she stood bravely facing him, quite unaware of the gentle artfulness of her appeal.

"On my honor as a gentleman, you are safe with me."

"Thank you." She spoke with frank acceptance.

"And before I go let me say how very sorry I am to have been in any way a cause of trouble to you. May I take the liberty of asking your name?" he added, smiling.

"I am Miss Olivia Wynne."

"It has a pleasantly familiar sound to me at least. It is an old name in and about Philadelphia."

Olivia had a feeling of reassurance as he spoke, and yet more as he added: "And now let me thank you for the shelter. And perhaps I shall further relieve your very natural suspicions if I say that I was on my way to dine with Mr. George Vincent when in the haste caused by my ducking I mistook the house."

"Mr. Vincent is our next neighbor," said Olivia.

"And I am very late. Good-evening, Miss Wynne."

He bowed, and, backing a step or two towards the door, came almost into contact with Mrs. Wynne. Her appearance was a surprise to both of the young people. The little old lady, pale, attenuated, lavish of lace, in long gloves, stood a moment in the doorway, which a servant had opened for her.

"A beautiful old dame," Francis thought. "I beg pardon," he said, retreating. "I am, by no fault of my own, an intruder here. I took refuge from the storm, supposing this to be Mr. Vincent's. Miss Wynne will explain; and perhaps I had best leave my sad case in her hands," he went on, in his smiling way, as he began again to make his way out.

Whatever had been the urgency of motive which had brought the old lady hastily down-

stairs, the excitement died away at once, and crushing a paper she held in her hand, she came forward, and to Francis's amusement, dropped him an old-fashioned courtesy, which took up a good deal of space and set the young man to bowing with equal formality, by virtue of that pleasant tendency to imitativeness which forms of physical politeness are apt to bring out.

"That is easily forgiven," said the old lady. "Are you sure that the rain is quite at an end?"

"Oh, quite so," said he.

"But you must be very wet," exclaimed Olivia.

Why exactly she said this, or, indeed, anything, would not have been clear to her had she looked for a reason. Perhaps she felt the sunshine of gentle likings which the young soldier carried with him.

"Oh, we don't mind that in the army," he laughed, and then looked ruefully at the soaked dress-shoes.

"Ah, you are in the service?" said Mrs. Wynne, who, though in the main satisfied by her first glance at the stranger, felt it to be well and also easy to learn something of a visitor who might bring danger with him. "I did not quite catch your name."

This delighted Olivia, who rarely saw her grandmother aroused.

"I owe you an apology," returned Francis, becoming, as he smilingly knew, beautifully courteous. "I might readily be pardoned any forget-

fulness. I am Philip Francis, a lieutenant in the 6th New Hampshire Cavalry. I am home on leave, owing to a wound." ("That covers the ground," he said to himself. "Shall I ever get out?")

As he spoke, the old lady advanced, but with such feebleness that Francis instinctively stepped forward to help her. "Thank you," she said, putting the finger-ends of one hand formally on his arm. Then she sat down, and, looking up, continued, —

"You will pardon an old woman's curiosity, but are you of the Philadelphia people of your name?"

"They have the honor to own me." And the merriment in his eyes found genial comradeship in Olivia's face.

"You are come of good people," she returned, in her thinnest and most tranquil voice. "And now ring, Olivia; we must not keep Mr. Francis any longer."

He bowed low; the old dame, rising with a little effort, courtesied; Miss Wynne said "Good evening," a touch of regret in her voice, and he left the room. He would have well liked to add, "May I come back to-morrow?" but this was clearly out of the question.

He put on his summer covering, took his hat, and went out into Fifth Avenue and up the adjoining steps. Then the fun of the thing overcame him, and he laughed aloud, to the astonish-

ment of a passer-by. "Well," he said, "I have kept Vincent waiting, but I have had an adventure; and what an adventure! Where, I wonder, is that handsome rebel? What a pity he did not turn up! — nothing on the stage could have beaten that! And by George what a noble-looking girl!" He wondered what Blake would say to it, and why his friend had been so annoyed at his helping Darnell; and thus reflecting, and still smiling at his remembrance of the part he had just played, he went in by the door which a servant threw open before him. Meanwhile, the old lady had turned to her grandchild, remarking, as she heard the hall door close, —

"Octopia has sent me two notes within the last ten minutes, my dear; she is very fond of notes. She said in them that Judith had seen a gentleman come in, and that it was not Richard Darnell, and that she was too ill to go down, and I must, — *must*, child! The woman has no manners; no Darnell ever had."

The impertinence stirred her more than many wrongs had done, and her granddaughter was surprised at her anger. Olivia did not see fit at this time to mention her own blunder.

"Perhaps, grandmamma, she did not mean it. She is ill, and uneasy about her brother."

"Then let her see to him herself! Ill? — nonsense! She is well enough when she pleases to do anything. And really, child, to bring me down-stairs in haste to see a stupid lad who has

not sense enough to get into the right house! A nice coil we are in now! as if we had any business with these rebel plots! As for her, she likes it; she is a born plotter. They are all plotters. They were in that business of Conway's against Washington. They were in Burr's conspiracy. They were always false to their country, and they cannot be true to any one. And my life is one long trouble; I have no peace or rest, — and shall have none till I am dead. Send for Susan. I must get to bed. Why does that man Darnell come at all? Ring! ring! do as I tell you, at once! No one obeys me."

Olivia did as she was told; and then Mrs. Wynne added, —

"You must talk to Octopia about all this. You can explain it. I do not propose to be questioned as to a matter of such small moment. Any one could see the man was a gentleman. Now go and quiet Octopia, or we shall have hysterics, and I shall be kept awake. There is no peace in this house. I have not knit two rows to-day."

Olivia went reluctantly up-stairs, thinking by turns of the manly, smiling face of the soldier and of what she should say to her cousin. The interview was not pleasant, and, worn out by the call upon her sympathies and the demand for more affection than she felt, the tired girl went to her room.

Her head ached, and with the consciousness of constant fatigue, the outcome of a life of strain

and repression, began to come its certain result, irritability.

Character is more subject in women than in men to changes physiologically produced, and Olivia was feeling the effect of bodily influences which alarmed her as little as they usually do the young. Her power of self-government was fast deserting her, and her reason was rapidly going over to the party of mutiny. Why should that tired old woman be so ceaselessly disturbed? She had a right to a placid life, to the inward and outward calm which she loved. That was an awful resurrection of buried passions Olive had seen. She began to hate Octopia at times, in little fractions of hatred.

CHAPTER XIII.

"The man who has not known sick women has not known women."

OLIVIA went into her cousin's room next morning feeling unusually well. As was common the day after one of these irritating scenes, Octopia made her a sweet apology for the annoyance she had shown concerning the girl's interview with Francis, as to which the sick woman had extracted the whole truth. Olivia often had the singular feeling of self-reproach which the healthy and vigorous sometimes experience in the presence of the sick and wasted; and, besides, she had taken herself to task for not seeing that Octopia's anxiety gave her some just cause to feel that Olive had been imprudent and thoughtless. She sat down to read, but, being rather preoccupied, read too loudly at times, and at other times could not be heard, or, worse still, failed to use her mental filter to keep back unpleasing portions of the war news.

At last, Octopia, as she lay on her lounge, half lifted a long hand in the way of protest. Speaking up at the ceiling, she said, —

"If you cannot omit abuse of the South, dear love, I would rather you did not go on."

"I have read two hours. I am tired," returned Olivia, "and that makes it difficult to be exact."

"Yes, dear, I know. You are very good to me. You know, dear, that I would read it myself, if I could do so without seeing all those cruel comments. The lies are so bad, and I can trust you to sift them. I have the sure consciousness that the South — my South — will win."

Olivia restrained herself in silence.

"Are you very tired?"

"Yes."

"We won't read any more;" and then, as Olivia rose, "but you 'll sit by me awhile? I hate to be alone. That won't tire you. You know, love, I always try to save you. Just a little while."

Olivia sat down with a sigh. These hours of patient waiting in the half light with Octopia's long fingers twined in hers were perhaps the hardest of her trials. A great love would have made them endurable, but scarcely more wholesome. The old black servant had said, "Missus do take it out of you," thus vaguely expressing the mysterious hurtfulness of the relation.

At last the girl rose, feeling that she could bear it no longer. For an hour she had been dreamily thinking of the sea, of flowers, of the joy of outdoor life, while Octopia patted her hands softly. "I must go," she said.

Octopia reluctantly set her free. She never meant to be irritable, and just at present she was unusually good-humored, and was, for reasons known to herself alone, trying to be very pleasant to the young girl. It was not easy; to divorce a

habit abruptly is not always possible. Nor was she fully able to realize the extent of her own rapacity of sacrifice; the lonely life of sickness had made self so near that its breath blurred the mirror of conscience.

Such a character is difficult for the young and the healthy to comprehend.

As Olivia turned to leave, the old black woman entered. "Massa Richard's down-stairs," she said, — "de real massa Dick."

"My brother!" exclaimed Octopia, with unusual energy. "Open the window, Judith. Give me my lace gown. Go down-stairs, Olive, and see him. You can bring him up in five minutes. Ah! at last! at last! my dear old Dick! Do you know, Olive, it is two years since we met. Kiss me, dear; I am so glad that I want every one to be glad with me. How does he look, Judith?"

"Dar ain't much change on him. He ain't worsened none, and he ain't bettered none, as I can see."

"Bettered! What do you mean? How could he be better? Now go, Olive, and be careful, this time; you will be very careful, dear, won't you?"

Promising to be prudent, the girl went slowly down to meet him. Two new acquaintances in a week represented to her a fortune in the way of social intercourse. A little on her guard, and more than a little curious, she entered the drawing-room.

We see well enough, as lives go on, how more or less inborn character and the ways in which men improve or distort it modify the features and write authoritative comments on a face. Happily, they who can read these lines aright are few in number. Climate, sicknesses, and the tricks of mere time sadly confuse these changeful hieroglyphics, so that for the general reader some men's faces lie as certainly as do their grave-stones in after years. But how far the face which nature has given may in turn influence character and affect gravely our actions is not so well realized by the most critical charity.

The strange beauty of the boy Darnell had been a curse to him. There are guards about a girl's attractiveness which a lad lacks. Some honest ancestor had given the young Virginian large, soft, brown eyes, ingenuous in expression, but had failed to endow him with the combination of moral qualities which, as time went on, should have given reality to what in childhood was but picture. The crown of curls around the head, the lips bold and clearly modeled in lines which approached those of feminine type, the masterful vigor of look and carriage, had won from a foolish mother that fatal form of worship which as years go on is apt to make an iconoclast of the idol's self.

Death saved her from seeing this, and a nervous, sensitive, adoring sister took up the evil task of despoiling a life by flattery and indulgence of its best chances. The firmest rule would have

found him difficult to save; the weakest treated him as a toy, and insured his ruin. What was good in him failed to crystallize in definite habits of good. He grew up amidst slaves and women, lawless and fearless, — a character in a state of solution. Good women and thoughtful men found in their relations to the slave a self-education which helped to evolve many noble characteristics by reason of the awful responsibilities which the position of master created. To a man like Darnell plantation-life was fatal.

As Olivia first saw him, he was leaning against the mantel, apparently busy with his own reflections. Turning, he said, —

"My cousin, Olivia Wynne. No need to present myself. Allow me to close the door."

"Good-morning, Mr. Darnell," she said.

"Can I not be Cousin Richard, after our good Virginia fashion? and let us consider that I am just now Richard Wynne. You see I have stolen your name."

"Pray sit down. Octopia will be ready to see you in a few minutes."

His personal beauty of face and grace of carriage, something daring in his large eyes, which were restless and watchful, together with his great likeness to Octopia, mysteriouly embarrassed his cousin.

"We had quite given up all hope," she said, — "all idea of seeing you. Octopia has been so very anxious; and the news of your escape has been an immense relief to her."

"Yes, I got out of that pen. I was taken at Spottsylvania. Like a fool, I volunteered while at headquarters on business, and so got hit and picked up on the field. I" — He was about to say how he had been taken; but he was a man who disliked obligations and shrank from needlessly acknowledging them. "I — in fact, I always liked a fight, from the time I was a boy. I never saw a cock-fight that I did not want to be a good gamester and in the pit."

"I suppose it is natural for a man to want to strike for his own cause," she said, reflectively, and then, smiling, but with a slightly anxious look, "you know that we are all for the North here, except, of course, Octopia?"

"Oh, naturally," he said. "It does n't matter much, though, either way."

"I think it does."

"Well, then I will think so too."

She was silent.

"How worried poor Octy must have been these last months! I am afraid that she must have been a grave trial to you all."

"Yes, she has been in sad distress, especially of late. You know how nervous and excitable she is, and at times so — so" — and she paused.

"I see," he broke in laughing. "Poor Octy! it is the same old thing, I reckon. I can never thank you and Cousin Anne enough for what you have done for her."

"It was not much," said Olivia. "Will you go up and see her? This way, please."

"You will like to be alone," said the girl, at the door of her cousin's room, as she fell back, noting with fresh interest the dissemblance within the resemblance between the brother and sister. A flush of joyous greeting was on Octopia's face and in her eyes, which shone brightly. He was bronzed as well as dark of tint, and had the same heavy eyelids, and the same slight retreat of the lower half of the face to a small but positive chin. The mouth was absolutely hidden in a jungle of mustache; perhaps nowadays it was as well.

Octopia had him in her arms in a moment. She loved this man beyond all other things on earth; to her there was nothing like him. Of old she had fatigued him by a glutinous affection which was readily self-sacrificial and not without the element of jealousy, — that avarice of the heart.

When they were alone, he asked if any one was in the front room.

"Only Judith," she said, — which was true, for the old servant was eagerly listening near the door.

"We need not mind her," he said, carelessly.

Then Octopia talked long to him about their home and friends, and of the state of the Confederacy, which both of them still looked upon as secure of final triumph. At last she began to speak of himself and of his plans, as to which she was very anxious.

He explained that when he first wrote of his intention to come to the North he had been commissioned by the Confederacy to go to England on an errand connected with the department in which he served. Then the purpose had been abandoned; and now, having been captured, it was his intention to remain in New York for a time, and to return to the South as soon as a good opportunity offered to get through the lines, — a matter which was becoming daily more difficult.

Octopia questioned him closely and with her usual shrewdness. He had, in fact, been originally charged with an errand to England, and desired while on his way to use the two thousand dollars he had lately acquired to buy quinine for his own profit, hoping to be able to smuggle it into the lines of the fast-shrinking Confederacy, where its value had become enormous. He had been captured not very unwillingly, but was now without money to carry on his schemes, having left in Richmond all he possessed. He had been from time to time aided by Octopia with money which reached him through England, and he was well aware that she had laid by some little means which had been given her by Mrs. Wynne when that lady's gratitude was at full tide. He knew also that what she had would be at his disposal; and already he began to think that with a little money he could find some way of bettering himself until he could succeed in reclaiming the funds he had left in Virginia. As to his duties at home,

they troubled him little, as his capture would explain his continued absence.

Already his head was full of schemes. The wild fluctuation of gold and stocks which he had read of in the papers awakened and excited his gambling propensities. That his plans might find in his sister a severe critic he did not fear. Once already he had ruined his sister's fortunes, and he meant now again to use her savings.

Having been brought up among people who professed certain distinct views as to delicate shades of what was right and wrong among gentlemen, he was by mere habit instinctively sensitive as to the opinions of others. It was the one religion left him. He resolved now to be careful.

As to Octopia, she would have liked to make clear to him that she was not a guest on sufferance in her cousin's house. She vaguely realized at times that she had almost used threadbare Mrs. Wynne's sense of gratitude, and in what she said she respected her fixed conception of her brother's sense of honor, little knowing to what deeps of degradation he had fallen since she had last seen him. She too resolved to be careful.

"I think, Octy, I shall be kept in New York for some time," he said. "You won't be sorry, I know; and I don't think the risk very great. I shall want a little money; I have some in Virginia, but I can't get it yet, and I am indisposed to risk crossing the lines just now. It will be easier after Grant is back across the Rapidan."

"I have enough for us both, Dick," she said, joyously, "unless" — and she laughed — "you are as great a spendthrift as you used to be."

"Oh, I 'm reformed, Octy."

"I hope so. You are at the Brevoort, you said. It is very expensive, and, I should think, dangerous. Suppose I ask Mr. Pennell where you had best live? He will do anything for me."

"What a treasure, Octy! Is he as sentimental as ever? Your descriptions of him were very amusing." And he laughed.

"Come, don't laugh at him, Dick. I am afraid I led you into that; but he *is* a little comical, what with his stoop, and his shyness, and his clocks, and his queer fancy for reforming young reprobates."

"Perhaps he would take me in hand."

"I will ask him," said she; and they laughed.

"By the way, what a beauty that girl is, Octy!"

"Ah, you think so?" she returned, smiling affectionately. "Her grandmother is very old, and she has, my dear Dick, a lot of money."

"A lot!" he said. "How much is a lot? You were always rather inaccurate in your statements."

"Was I?" she said, with entire good humor, rather liking criticism from her brother. "She may have two or three hundred thousand; not less, certainly. It is rather amusing, but Olive, who is the merest child, has not the faintest notion that she is an heiress. She would make you a good wife, Dick, she is so perfectly manageable;

and the fact is, she meets no one — really no one — but ourselves."

"I see," he returned, thoughtfully. "Do you truly think it possible?"

"It is more than possible. I have an influence here which is greater than you could suppose."

"That 's all very well, Octy; but what is an influence?"

"Power," she said, proudly, — "power, if you like that better, and the will to use it for you."

"But now-a-days we can't make girls marry whom we please. What power have you?"

She colored, having said more than she meant to say. "No matter what," she replied. How could she confess to her brother, a man who had always resented any imputation on his honor, what was the hold she had on the fears of two helpless women? Would he continue to love her as she believed he did? Society is kept in existence by a system of moral credits. "They are under obligations to me. I cannot tell you anything more."

Had she a faint distrust of the use he might make of the knowledge he sought? With all her affection for him there was a margin of distrust.

"It does n't matter," he returned, carelessly. "You may think better of it; and as for me, I have time on my hands, and what you say seems plausible enough. Yet if I knew what you meant" —

"It is well that you should not; and you had

better leave me to do as I think best. You would only spoil all."

Concerning Octopia's secret he smiled a little; she had always been rather fond of mystery. As to Olivia herself that was a matter for reflection.

"You don't know the old lady, and I do," Octopia added.

"Oh, I could manage her."

"No, you could not. Wait till you see her. And now never urge me about this again. Here is fifty dollars; that ought to answer for the present."

"All right," he said, only half pleased. "And now for Cousin Olivia."

The pantomime in the front chamber during this talk was interesting enough. The old black woman stood by the door, the darkness of her face making it inexpressive, — a mere patient figure of waiting weariness. She had a feminine admiration for Massa Dick; he had never been brutal to her — indeed he was not that, — and she had once had a slave's pride in his reckless courage. As to Octopia it was otherwise.

Why she listened she could hardly have said, except that the furtive cunning of slavery had given with the idea of possession of another's secret a sense of power. Waning intelligence and the timidity of a life of serfdom made it as useless to her as great wealth would have been. She began, however, to feel vaguely, as she listened, that there was in what she heard some peril for

Olivia, — the one little affection she had acquired amidst her life of monotonous service in Octopia's sick-room. Once while they talked she heard her own name, and instantly walked softly across the room and then back more heavily, and entered Octopia's chamber.

"Was you a-callin'?" she said. "I did n't hear. I was a-sittin' by the window. How do, Massa Dick?"

"Glad to see you, aunty," said Darnell. "You can go back, and shut the door."

She did as he bade her, a weak smile crossing her face. Cunning is the kindly little devil of the feeble in mind, and, if there be sex among the smaller fiends, is of the female kind. She went to the window and sat down, thinking disconnectedly as she heard Darnell go away.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Our fate hath its own lords,
Which if we follow truly there can come
No harm unto us."

MEANWHILE, Philip Francis went back to Philadelphia. He carried with him a mild sense of the romance of his adventure and some agreeable remembrance of the woman he had seen. Perhaps his feeling of the absurdity of the affair was even more present to his mind, since the laughable aspects of events were apt to dominate him. Had Olivia been more of an *ingénue*, he would possibly have been captivated by her grace and the gentle old-fashioned manners she had unconsciously acquired from her grandmother; but the childlike embarrassment of the tall girl struck him as more ludicrous than attractive. There is somewhere a tender bribe for every man, and chance arranges the hour of temptation; it had not yet come for Philip Francis.

At home he kept his own counsel about his interview, and late in January returned to the army, then lying in front of Petersburg.

His brigade had long since been detached from the duties of the provost-marshal general's headquarters, and transferred to the cavalry corps,

which was lying "retired" on the left of the army. He sought an early chance to visit Blake, and, after a long ride to the immediate front, he found his friend, now become a major in the infantry regiment he had joined as a private.

The tent, with its flooring and camp-furniture, was comfortable enough; and, seated on two rough camp-stools, the friends chatted gayly of home and the war, while the shells rose in air, and gigantic rings of dun smoke, slowly twisting and breaking, hung over the mortar-batteries. Every moment the boom of siege-guns was heard, and now and then a musket-shot rang out, while around the tents the jingle and countless noises of an army in winter-quarters filled the air.

"Glad to get back?" said Blake. "How well you look! Madeira and terrapin, I suppose."

"No. I have been too much in the cheerful hands of the doctors. You seem pretty comfortable here yourself. It begins to look, Roland, as if this heavy joke called war would soon be over. I should like to be about when Mr. Lee says to Mr. Davis, 'And what shall we do now, Mr. Ringmaster?'"

"I have found it a pretty expensive circus," returned his friend. "Seriously, I shall be enchanted to get back to a rational existence; it is so supremely ridiculous to be eternally at another man's beck and call."

"And, after all, what is the good of it? We shall only slip again under the rule of ward politics."

Blake smiled. "Then what are you doing here? If you don't believe in the war, you are criminal. It is either wickedness or first-class righteousness, — God's war for you, or a game of hell. I am thankful to see any duty on earth as clearly as I saw this one."

"Confound it, Roland, how absolute you are! You know well enough that I would not be here unless I believed in it. Wait till you get hit so that you are no better than a colander. I have seen more than one fellow leak a little earnestness out of a bullet-hole; and as for me, I 've been regularly on tap."

"It 's the talk I object to, Phil. Half the men you meet believe you. I can't see what pleasure you can get out of an affectation of cynicism. There is no use lecturing a man like you. No one does lecture you but me, and pretty soon you will lose my charming advice. School does n't keep after twenty-five. You only make people laugh at what they should not laugh at."

"All right. Let 's shut up the Sunday-school. You got a good bit of malarious liver into that preachment. How are the chills?"

"Punctual, rather," he said, laughing. "The general's orderly was growling yesterday over his own share of them when I went to the hospital for quinine; the old Irishman has been in the army for thirty years, you know. Upton asked him if his chills were regular. 'Dade and they 're intirely volunteer,' he said, with delicious scorn."

"What a lovely story! And, by the way, Roland, I have a queer tale to tell you. I thought my adventures were over when I left camp, but this beats the picket-line for romance."

"Well, what is it? Do you swear or affirm? I never half believe you."

"Oh, it 's true this time."

Then Francis related at length his visit to the Wynnes', and made himself amusing enough until he began to tell that portion of his story which dealt with Darnell. At this Blake became grave. The clever picture Francis drew of the girl's child-like embarrassment and her womanly feeling and pretty old-fashioned manner struck Blake as interesting; and he was hardly less attracted by the vivid sketch of the ancient gentlewoman whom not even his friend's cynical comments could make ridiculous to Roland. He was familiar with the type, and the memories it aroused were pleasant and gracious. As Francis talked, the idea of a villain so unscrupulous as Darnell at large and in such company struck him as horrible.

At last he said, moodily, "And what did you — what shall you do about it?" He forgot that to Francis, Darnell was only a very gallant soldier.

"Do! What could I do? I don't quite see what you mean."

"No: you are right. I forgot. There is something in all this which I cannot talk about, — of which, in fact, as I said before, I am not at liberty to speak freely."

He was perplexed at the position in which he found himself. To tell Francis what Darnell really was involved the breaking of his word and the betrayal of an official duty. How far Darnell's treachery to himself ought to modify his own obligation to be silent he could not settle to his satisfaction, and to have saved the life of the man who had made a cowardly attempt on his own seemed oddly to complicate the ethical situation.

Up to this time it had been easy enough to put the thing away out of his life, but now he began to be further perplexed by hearing that Darnell was in the North, a free man, and apparently in relation with those to whom he might be dangerous.

His friend had been intently watching him, though seemingly much occupied with a blocked-up pipe, during the few moments of silence which followed his last words. The privilege of holding one's tongue is not the least valuable gift of friendship to life.

At last Francis spoke: "As the snail said to the grasshopper, I don't quite follow you; but" —

"Would you kindly explain yourself?" cried Blake, much amused.

"Explain! I never wish to be asked to explain. As you observed to me in your last letter, there is nothing so clear as the unexplained, because then all solutions are open to us."

"I said nothing of the sort," returned Blake.

"Well, it does n't matter. It describes my own

state of mind as concerns this Darnell business. Perhaps I put it rather too practically. We will call it conversational whittling, if you like."

"Very good. I like that. It 's better than usual," said Blake, throwing himself on the floor of the tent and lighting his meerschaum. "Go ahead, Gamaliel: let 's have more of the shavings of wisdom."

"Oh, Roland, what is really on my mind is this. It is plain to me that something in connection with this man Darnell is troubling you. What it is I do not care to know, unless for me to know it will help you. If without that I can be of any kind of use in the matter, whether with purse or hand or advice, I am at your service, and this once for all."

Blake looked up, touched both by the offer and by a certain affectionateness in the manner of making it.

"There is one thing," he said. "To-morrow is my detail for the picket reserve. If I get badly hit, or killed, as may chance to any of us, you will find in my valise a letter to you which will explain what I may have to say. I mean to write such a letter. If I live, there will be no need of it."

Then he added, abruptly, "Do you think one has duties to people one never saw?"

Francis could not be serious very long. He laughed:

"Most obviously it is my duty to kill rebels I never saw."

"Hang it, Phil, you are insufferable!"

"I find myself so very often," he returned, rising and buckling on his sabre-belt. "The folks at home write me they have sent you a box of small luxuries; you 'll get it in a day or two. And now I must go."

Blake thanked him, and they said "good-by" as the cavalry-man swung himself into the saddle and rode away, humming gayly a doggerel verse set to the "stable call," while the bugle was ringing out the "retreat."

CHAPTER XV.

"The purple violet bring, that blows
In May time, and to bind my brows
Snow-born arbutus ; sprinkle my house
With the sacred waters of content,
And joy shall blossom like the rose,
In every heart that 's innocent."

MEANWHILE, the little household in New York was feeling in various ways the influence of the new visitor. He made himself agreeable to the old lady, who, despite her distrust of all Darnells, was fond of flattery, as the old are usually, having the feeling that it must be true, as they have nothing of material value to give in return. She liked also his gentle Southern ways with women, and had always found it pleasant to be asked for advice ; so that after a time she began to look eagerly for his visits, and to forget that his position was open to criticism and that he was an enemy to her cause, as to which she was, after all, more indifferent than Olivia.

As to that young person, she found that his presence gave her a lease of comparative freedom, and that now his sister was always willing that she should be absent from her lounge when such absence involved a talk or a walk with the brother. He was a man who had read little, but

he was shrewd enough to observe that Olivia liked a kind of literature with which he had never troubled himself, and it was easy to glance over the books he brought her and to learn enough of them to be able to talk about them. He liked well to walk with her, avoiding the more crowded streets, in dread of some chance recognition.

The girl's distrust was deeper than her grandmother's, because instinctive. His nominal disguise and strong Southern sentiments, as to which he was too wise to dissemble, and the mystery about his errand, were all repugnant to Olivia's frank nature; but attentions were new to her, and pleasant, and so the days went by without her perceiving in her innocent inexperience that she was running some risk.

Two or three weeks ran away, and still he lingered in New York, while for Olivia life began to have novel and pleasant aspects, without her having as yet any of those sudden womanly revelations which startle a young girl and force her to ask herself definite questions as to her true relation to some one of the other sex.

Darnell had begun a deliberate campaign for which at first there was no motive but selfish greed. For a time he was watchful and cautious. He ended by loving her, and began to lose some of the subtlety which is possible only when the heart is untouched.

It was early in January when Darnell reached New York. How he spent the winter he would

have found it hard to say. Certainly he amused himself; and Olivia had a large share of his leisure. At times he was depressed, at other times in high spirits. Twice he returned after absences of some days and said that he had failed to get through the lines. "It is not," he explained, "as if I were in the army. I should in that case take every risk."

Octopia hoped he would not be as reckless as usual. As to Olivia, when he bade her good-by she was sorry, and when he came back she was really glad to see him. At his best he was very gentle; his mere tones were flatteries to the woman of the minute, and the contrast between almost feminine beauty and the most masculine courage has a strange attraction. She could not but like him. He even succeeded in persuading Mrs. Wynne and Octopia into whist in the early evenings. It is not strange that he grew more and more a needful part of their life, and that his presence became pleasant to Olivia. Had he been more patient, he might possibly have won her. She had almost ceased to wonder why he stayed. And thus the long winter months went by.

Now that the war had practically come to an end there seemed to him no especial reason why he should leave Octopia, who was depressed while he was away and anxious with a certain mingling of gladness when he came back.

He had of course ceased to fear recognition; his absence had been explained to his Virginia friends,

and he was thus still more free to accompany his young cousin. He came and went almost as if he had been an inmate of the too quiet household, and one pleasant afternoon in April sauntered into the parlor, saying as he entered, "I have leave for you to go and see the flower-show." For a moment she scarcely seemed to hear him, being intent on an afternoon paper. Then she looked up.

"Thank you," she said; "I should like it well. I shall be ready in ten minutes."

"But what interested you so much in those wretched papers? They contain little but abuse of the ruined South."

"Oh! nothing of importance. I chanced to see in the list of brevets the name of a gentleman I knew, — very slightly, you know, — a Mr. Francis, Philip Francis."

"Francis," he repeated. "Why, that must be the man I met in the hospital. He was so good as to remember me while I was shut up in Fort Delaware. Good-looking man, with blue eyes, rather nice manners, and a pretty sharp tongue."

"Very nice manners," said Olive, "and very handsome."

"Well, so-so; but where on earth did you chance to know him?"

Then Olive told her little story of the encounter with Francis, greatly to the rebel gentleman's amusement.

"Octopia mentioned it," he said, "but you tell

it better; you are very clever as a story-teller. By the way, he had a friend who did me a service the day I first met Mr. Francis. I will tell you about it some time, but now you had better get ready; my tale will keep."

In a few minutes she returned, equipped for the walk, and they went gayly down the avenue. As they moved along she said to him, —

"I am curious about your story. Perhaps you do not know how curious I am. I want to hear it now, at once."

"I wish," he said, "I could give you all you want as easily. What would I not give you, Olive! The world is full of pleasant things. You should have them all, if I had my way."

"You are very good to me," she returned.

"Who would not be good to you? but life has not been kind to me, and I have little to give that is worth the giving."

"I owe you much already."

"Ah! I should like to have you deeper in my debt. You like books, and horses, and travel, and pictures, and flowers; what can a ruined gentleman give you of these?" and he smiled bitterly, thinking what true delight he would have, were he able, as he should have been, to give to this generously dowered girl the things which seemed to be her natural rights.

"Yes," she said, "I like them all; but it is useless to complain. I am not so badly off as some, I dare say."

Then they walked on for a while in silence, the man glancing now and then at her pleasant face, and feeling that his affairs were not unprosperous so far as the person at his side was concerned.

At last she turned to him suddenly, saying, "But about your story. I begin to think you don't want to tell it."

"Why not?" he returned, pleasantly, and went on at once to relate how Blake had rescued him.

He told it well; and as Olive listened, she seemed with her artist faculty of visual realization to see the misty battle-field, and the laden man stumbling over awful heaps of the wounded and the dead.

"Do you remember Bedivere and Arthur in the 'Morte d'Arthur'?" she said, shyly. "It was like that, was it not?"

"I never read it."

"Indeed! then you must," she cried.

"My education is progressing," he said; "I have led a foolish, half-wasted life, and now you are making me feel keenly how many things there are which I do not know, and how much there is in them that may make existence happier."

Olive felt agreeably the implied flattery. "Thank you," she said, simply. "But tell me, have you never met Mr. Blake since?"

"No; I wrote to him through Francis, but he did not reply."

"That seems singular, does it not?"

"Yes, very."

"I should like to see that man," she said.

"Oh, it was n't anything very great, after all," returned Darnell, lightly. "I suppose that anybody would have done much the same."

"But what was he doing so far from our own lines?"

"I asked Francis that; you see we got rather intimate on the hospital boat which took us up to Fortress Monroe. He told me that one of our people, a colonel, attracted some attention by the way he led the assault, and then walked coolly away, until he was struck by a chance shot. Captain Blake, who must be, I reckon, rather a romantic individual, wandered out to find the colonel, and not discovering him, more 's the luck, chanced on me."

"Ah!" exclaimed Olive, feeling that her desire to see the hero of the exploit was justified, and also not liking the tone in which Darnell spoke of him. "He must be a gallant gentleman," she said.

"Oh, as to that, courage is common enough. Look at those horses, Olive. That near bay is a beauty," and thus chatting of the things about them they came to the door of the exhibition hall, and were soon moving here and there in a dense crowd of well-dressed people. The flowers were shown in aid of the Sanitary Commission, and were of unusual beauty, from the gorgeous groups of azaleas to the sweet democracy of the violet.

It cannot be said that Darnell enjoyed the

flowers. It may be questioned if many people get true pleasure out of them, — not many men, we may be sure. But there is some delicate mystery of friendliness between certain women and flowers. The relation is real, but almost too delicate for even the kindliest poetic analysis.

If, to Darnell, the rose and the lily were alike indifferent, he was human enough, and interested enough in the woman at his side, to enjoy and humor her eager delight. She moved slowly among the flowers, now ceasing to hear what he said, now asking rapid questions, which he could not answer. She paused at last in wonder before a collection of fantastic orchids. One of them she said was a joke; one she was sure was laughing. Presently, a gray-haired old gentleman, attracted by the charm of her joyous curiosity, and amused by her fancies, called her attention to a hooded orchid, which looked like a cowled monk, but was splotched with crimson.

"One might have strange fancies about a flower like that," he said. Darnell stared at the speaker, with a faint feeling of dislike at the intrusion of some one who seemed to be in accord with her odd ideas.

Olive said: "Yes, that is true. I do not like that flower. It looks wicked. Don't you think it looks wicked?"

"It is wicked, I am sure," said the old gentleman. Then he added: "In fact, I am almost ashamed to own it. Please to accept my apolo-

gies, and if ever you would like to see my orchids, — and I have many more, — here is my card."

Olive flushed, and said "Thank you," as she turned away. The orchid-grower wiped his spectacles, and readjusted them, and looked after her, and quoted a line of Wordsworth to himself, and then, glancing at Darnell, murmured something about human orchids, after which he reflected briefly upon the uncharitableness of judgments founded on a glance, and so returned to the worship of his orchids.

"Queer old fellow," said Darnell. "Who is he?"

Olive glanced at the card, and then swiftly searched with her eyes for a sight of the old poet, dear through all the gentle melancholy of his verse to every true lover of wood and stream.

"Oh, I do wish I had only known," she cried, giving the card to Darnell.

As he read the name, he became dimly aware that it was that of a man he ought to have known something more about.

"Do you like his verses?" he ventured to say, ingeniously hesitating to commit himself.

"Like them? Surely I like them. Don't you like them?"

"Really," he said, "it is so long since I read them that I forget what impression they made on me. You must read them to me, Olive. But are n't you tired?"

"A little," she said, "not much. It is so delightful. Just one look at the window gardens and we will go." Nevertheless, she flitted for a half hour from violets to roses, and from a gorgeous show of geraniums to a bank of penitent lilies, until Darnell, a little bored and a little cross, having been much elbowed by too eager people, was glad to get on to the steps out of the close air.

As they moved slowly in the crowd a young fellow pushed hurriedly by them, roughly jostling Darnell, as he passed. The Virginian was just in a state of mind to resent anything. He caught the lad, for he was hardly more, by the arm, and said, "You need a lesson in manners, sir."

"I beg pardon," said the young man, with rare good humor. "My mother was taken ill and I wanted to find her carriage."

For a moment Darnell still held him. The young man flushed.

"Let go," he said. "If there were not women here" —

"What!" exclaimed Darnell.

Olive put a hand on his arm.

"Richard, let him go — please." Darnell released him. Her touch sobered the angry man. The younger gentleman hesitated a moment, and then, remembering his errand, lifted his hat to Olivia, said "You will pardon me, miss," and was lost in the crowd.

"I can't say much for the manners of your Northern men," said Darnell, savagely, as they walked on.

"I thought the young man behaved well," returned Olive. "I think myself that you were needlessly cross, Cousin Richard."

"Well, I suppose so. I hate to be elbowed. The fact is, I hate Yankee elbows worse than others." And he laughed.

"These are not Yankees," said she, smiling. "You forget your lessons. I am a Yankee."

"Oh, Olive, I wish they were all like you."

She made no reply, but walked on in silence. She was by nature thoughtful and considerate of others. The scene she had witnessed shocked her, and somehow she felt that a more than usually pleasant afternoon had been spoiled for her by Darnell's irritability. Then she reflected that to her, at least, he had never been cross, and presently she wondered if he might not be.

CHAPTER XVI.

"If his is not a kingly rôle,
To be the chancellor of his soul
And keep his conscience well might be
A task no saint would envy thee."

APRIL had come and gone and jilted the hopes of spring. The surrender of Appomattox had passed into history. May had passed, and young June came in with a mind to cover up and hide the graves four years had filled.

Warm days stole by in gentle procession and thronged tree and root and bud with the kindly life of spring-time. Opposite to Olivia's window were two great horse-chestnuts. Every day she sketched their changing buds. They were queer insects yesterday, and green-winged katydids the next day, and soon pretty verdurous tents. She, too, was changing, and was almost as unconscious of it as they.

At last came a day which was to other days as is a fairy prince to common men, and to which the yearning summer opened wide her heart. "And oh, to be in the country now!" said Olive, and, turning, saw Judith carrying a basket of flowers, which she set on the table. Before Olive saw them the scent said to her, "We are roses come to court."

"Where did they come from, Judith? I love them!" she cried, and half buried her head in the basket, drinking in their fragrance, and then asked again, "Do you know, Judith, where they came from?" She knew well enough herself, and made pretty pretense of ignorance.

"Out ob de debil's garden," exclaimed the old black woman, looking about her.

"What do you mean by such talk? You have been very strange of late, Judith. What do you mean?"

"Dat 's a way I has ob sayin' things," returned the black. "Don't yo go to tell nobody I said dat. Maybe I don't hab no meanin'. I 's jest a pore ole mammy."

"You are clever enough and mysterious enough at times. Are those flowers for me?"

"Reckon dat was what Massa Dick meant."

"How very nice of him!" And again she buried her face caressingly in the basket.

"I heard Missus Octy tell him dey was good for young ladies. He would n't nebber hab thought ob fetchin' flowers."

Olivia rose and pushed away the basket. She was conscious of the malice in the words, but had at the same time a sense of disappointment and then a bewildering feeling of confusion. "You are impertinent," she said, impatiently, and turning, saw that the black had left the room.

She was still standing regarding the flowers and deep in thought, when Darnell entered quietly,

having left the basket himself and then gone upstairs for a brief visit to Octopia.

As he came in, the look of purity and innocent calmness in the girl's attitude and face struck him. A sudden sense of regret went through his consciousness. He wished for the moment that he had been a better man, and that the memory of a certain dark night in the Wilderness was not on his mind. "I am glad now," he thought, "that I did not kill him." Then he put it aside as he advanced. He felt that his love was nobler than his nature.

"Good-morning," she said, coldly. "How do you find Octopia?"

"Better," he said, — "so much better that she has begun to talk of her usual visit to Richfield Springs. I shall take her myself some time in July, and leave her there with Judith."

"How long shall you stay with her?" returned Olivia, absently.

"Only three or four days. As soon as she will let me off I shall come back."

"Ah," she said, indifferently, smoothing her gown as she stood. Then she added, forcing herself to make talk, but preoccupied, "When do you go South again?"

"I do not know. I ought to go at once. I should have gone long ago but for Octopia; and now she insists on my remaining until she comes back from the Springs. I hardly realize yet that the war is over for the time, and that we poor

Southerners are free to go and come. What little is left us in Virginia needs looking after," — this he said with decent indistinctness, — "but," he continued, "I find it hard to go."

"It will be a sad visit, I fear," said Olivia. She felt deeply for the brave men who had laid down their arms and gone back to mournful homes. Indeed, the man beside her would have had a better chance had he been of those who had taken the full risks of war.

"Yes," he replied, "it will be as you say — sad enough." In reality he cared little for the principles involved in the war, but he had a sense of personal defeat, which only the noble endure with dignity. "It is not so pleasant a subject that I like to talk of it, even to one so tender as yourself."

She made no reply to his last words, but went on arranging the books on her table. There was a pause, and then he said, abruptly, —

"I hope you like your flowers."

"Yes; I like flowers."

"But I want you to like my flowers, Olivia."

"I like all flowers."

"Then I wish I were flowers."

She was silent.

"I shall have to go very soon now," he continued. "It would make my going easier, Olive, if I could think that you would remember me kindly when I am gone."

She wished he would go at once; the growing softness in his voice troubled her.

"I shall always think kindly of you," she said. "You have done much to make my life brighter. Don't think I do not feel grateful."

His passion overcame him as he watched her, and got the better of his prudence.

"I have stayed," he said, "because I love you. No man could love a woman more. Save for Octopia, I am a lonely man. You have given my life a new value and fresh motives. I think I could make you happy, and God knows you would make me better."

She stood before him silent and disturbed, and tore to pieces leaf by leaf the rose she had held when he first entered. "That is like my life," he said, pointing to the flower. "I have lost, leaf by leaf, as it were, my home, my lands, my people, and now my country is ruined. I am a poor Virginia gentleman; I have nothing to give you but my love. So help me God, it is honest, Olive."

He felt some stern need to put it thus earnestly. It was most true that day. He loved her.

She was still speechless, and the remnant of the rose fell at her feet. A storm of pity, suspicion, and tender self-pleading went over her young heart, ever too open at the signal of distress, as Octopia had easily learned. He had been good to her, and helpful, and gentle.

"Don't answer me now, Olive. Let it rest."

"Oh, thank you!" she said. "I—I—I don't know. I don't think I ever shall know." Then she looked up at his face, and his strong likeness

to Octopia was half-consciously disturbing. Somehow the observation steadied her.

"Cousin Richard," she said, "I am only a girl, and I know little of the world and too little of myself. I cannot answer you now, and I do not believe that I shall ever see my way to be more to you than I am to-day. Please not to say any more."

He was not altogether dissatisfied, but the girl's sudden assumption of a woman's calmness of demeanor showed him that he had not at all understood the decisiveness and force of her character.

"Thank you," he said. "It is quite natural, dear Olive, that you should want to wait. If it be for years, I shall be patient." He was quite tender about it, and seemed to be comforting her rather than himself. In fact, he had reflected briefly. He had a pet idea that the winning of a woman depends somewhat, as he would have coarsely stated it, on the amount of advertisement you do. He would make a new siege, and not be in too great haste, and was not without belief that some day he might find a helpful traitor in her heart. "I am friend enough even in my love to wish that you should wait until you know me better."

"Thank you!" she said; and he went out of the room, leaving her ready to cry and half angry with herself. Suddenly she stumbled as it were over a memory of Philip Francis and the vision of his laughing face. Then she heard her cousin

go up-stairs, and after a few minutes was aware of the hall door being opened and shut, and through the window saw him go smiling down the steps.

"He has been up to see Octopia, — I really think he has been up-stairs to tell Octopia; and what has she said to please him, I wonder?"

She was vexed at the visit and at its result, — his smiles.

A first love-affair to a pure young girl, end as it may, has in it a mystery like the coming of spring; it is sure to give her some curious self-knowledge unknown before. It sets the sure seal of womanhood on the thoughtful and the best feminine natures, and, with its offspring of hopes and fears and doubts and wonders and emotional disturbance, is an event so tremendous in its effects that perhaps no man can approach a correct estimate of its influences on the woman. But it is the indecisive love-affairs that are the most potent moral ferments, and doubt is a fruitful soil.

Olivia had been brought up among her elders in a life unnaturally devoid of contacts with the young of her sex, so that absence of talk of other girls' love-affairs and of the lighter gossip about such matters had left her simple and uninstructed. The heart of such a woman often surrenders to love with difficulty. Society has done half the wooing beforehand for some women; the sunshine of opportunity does the rest. For nobler souls living out of the world the pride of purity and an intelligent sense of moral obligation to their own

being guards well the heart which once won is won forever.

Olivia felt that not even to her grandmother could she now talk freely. The call on her pity and sympathy, the gentle thankfulness for a happier, fuller life, had come, like a too early spring day to the rosebud which coyly peeps out a little and waits for more certain sunshine.

When she sat down to think a little, like a wholesome-minded maid, of the life before her, her indecision soon grew to certainty of dissent. Life with Richard Darnell, — a home, his children, — she flushed. They did not seem, as she thought of it, to be hers also.

There was no sweetness in the thought. She had an echo of new distrust as she pictured to herself Octopia clinging to her brother and herself for a lifetime. She abruptly ceased thinking, as one shuts up a tedious book, leaving no marker between the leaves.

But she was not done with it. Octopia was preparing for her annual visit to Richfield, and the preparation, always elaborate, wearied her and made her calls upon Olivia incessant and perplexing. The little notes to Olivia and to Mrs. Wynne were more numerous, and twice Octopia had spent half a morning with the latter, to Olive's surprise.

Late in the winter evenings Olivia's piano was her greatest resource after the trials of the day were over; but in the warm weather of July, when windows and doors were open, the music

disturbed Octopia, and Judith was apt to appear with a note soon after the music began, and "would dear sweet Olive please not to play this evening?" At last the piano was permanently closed, to the young woman's damage, as music always soothed and steadied her.

Meanwhile, Richard Darnell uttered no further words of wooing, but was simply kind, constantly endeavoring in various ways to save the girl from his sister's exactions. Once only he said that Octopia was not fit to live with other women; that, in fact, he did not see how any one could live with her. Olivia wondered how he could have guessed so well her own feelings on this subject.

Meanwhile Mrs. Wynne looked worn and thinner than ever, but said nothing to her grandchild.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Thou must be lord and master of thy own actions — not as a servant or a hireling."

A MONTH or more was commonly required to prepare for any journey Octopia had to make: she had learned the follies of luxury easily. For a few days she thought of taking Olivia with her; but she was already faintly jealous, and now at least should have Dick to herself for a season. It was near August before she felt able to leave.

The day preceding that of her departure she was seated in the easiest of all the uneasy seats in Mrs. Wynne's sitting-room, and in front of her, still erect from long habit, in a high-backed chair, sat the elder lady.

"I am going away to-morrow," said Octopia, "and I want to have a talk with you about Olive."

"We have had so many," returned Mrs. Wynne, wearedly.

"That is not my fault, cousin. The girl has no sense. You are old, Cousin Anne, and I am sick and feeble; I have never recovered my health since that awful week with Cousin Arthur. I have paid for your security from the discomfort of publicity with my lost life."

Mrs. Wynne put up both thin palms in tremulous protest. "I can't bear it," she said.

"I don't want to remind you of it. It is all I can bear, to think of it myself. But about Olivia. Dear cousin, who is to care for her when we are gone? She will simply fall a prey to some fortune-hunter. My brother loves her, as I have told you. He is a gentleman, and kind and tender. What woman could want a better fate than to marry him?"

"How can I induce her to do that? I cannot. It seems to me I can have no peace or quiet! There is always something, — always something!"

"But I don't want you to insist on her doing what she does not want to do," said Octopia. "It is true, as I told you, that she has put him off, — which only means that she has the natural hesitation any girl has about such matters. I don't complain of that: it is all right. Now, if you will only talk to her a little and put it before her as your wish, I am sure it will have its influence. I find that I can always get her to do as I want."

The old lady's face lit up. She detested contests, and saw a way to deliverance. "Suppose," she said, "you were to talk to her."

"Oh, what I should say would not — could not — indeed, ought not to have the same weight as what you would say. And besides, I have a feeling of delicacy about it, Cousin Anne."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Wynne, with a feeble sense of amusement.

"Yes. It must come from you. It is a service I would gladly render you and her, but I am not well enough for a struggle with Olive."

"And do you think I am?"

"No, I do not; but it is your duty, and not mine."

"It hardly seems to me a duty, Octopia. Why should I or any one interfere?"

"Oh, really, I cannot go all over this again," returned Octopia, rising, her sallow face flushing with annoyance. She stood with one hand on the old lady's chair to steady herself, and looked down at her. "If you insist," she said, — "if you desire it, — I will talk to Olive; but to do so I must make her understand that she is not situated as other girls are."

"Oh, my God, woman," broke in Mrs. Wynne, looking up, "you could not say that! How could you say that? Let it die with us, who are old in suffering and can bear it. You shall not tell her! Octopia, you have no heart."

"I have too much," — and she believed it, — "so much that rather than not help Olive even against her foolish self I am willing to inflict pain upon her and myself. Will you speak to her, cousin?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Wynne, worn out and trembling; "if I must, I will." She knew that she must.

"Oh, there is no 'must' about it. And you will be firm with her, — make her see that it is her duty to you?"

"God help me! I will do my best."

"No one can do more. But you are sure you will be decided? I don't want to have to aid you in the only way I can. If you fail, I may have to help you."

"God forbid!" thought the older woman, and her head fell in feeble submission and in prayer, as Octopia, staying her weakness by a touch on table or chair-back, went out of the room. As she opened the door, Judith fell back, saying, —

"Lor, Missus, you done skeer me, you 's so sudden."

Octopia was too much preoccupied for active suspicion, but she said, "You are always about doors," while the shuffling old black woman scuttled away, muttering, and glad of an escape of such unlooked-for ease.

As to her mistress, she was at a crisis. For years she had secured a home and luxury by gently-urged claims which amply sufficed to keep Mrs. Wynne in a state of obedience which she found insured her comfort. The marriage of Olivia to Richard Darnell was a scheme of recent growth. Her plan had always for her a certain vagueness which seemed to prevent her from seeing it in a true and unpleasant light. Octopia had always said to herself, "I am only using and shall only use my knowledge to secure to me and to them a mutual relation which will be of service to them." As to going further she had no

intention. To proclaim what she knew, would be, she was well aware, an act of dishonor, which she set aside as for her impossible. She may have had some doubt as to whether such a revelation would not destroy the practical values which it possessed so long as it remained unuttered.

There had also been for her, of late, a question as to Olivia, who was plainly developing such strength of resistance as annoyed the woman who had found her so docile a year or two back. Richard had strongly urged his sister to let his love-affair alone; but Octopia was too fond of control to see the wisdom of his advice. He had said also that they were unwise to go away; but this, too, seemed silly to his sister, who could not understand how any one could fail to love him, and who thought that his absence for a few days would but cause Olivia to miss his constant attentions.

The next morning Octopia was seated in a carriage about to start for the station, surrounded with an invalid's armament of cushions, shawls, and smelling-salts. Darnell waited impatiently on the door-step, while Judith, hot and shining, went and came. At last Octopia declared herself ready, and Darnell entered the hack. As Judith was about to follow him, her mistress said, —

"Here is a note. I forgot it. Take it up to Mrs. Wynne, — mind, Mrs. Wynne, — and make haste."

"We shall be late," said Darnell.

"Dick, you are like all men. The only patient

men I ever saw were fishing. Imagine youself fishing. She will not be long."

A minute or two passed, and the black returned.

"Ah! get in, Judy." And they drove away.

Octopia was supremely happy, now that she had her brother to herself for some days and could envelop him with eager affection. Women of Octopia's type are heart-misers; they like to have constant touch and sight of the gold of love. Even friendship with them becomes a retail business, sustained by a multitude of little exchanges.

For the time, Richard Darnell meant to accept the *rôle* of vassal to his sister's whims; nor was he altogether aware of the extent to which her enduring persistency influenced even him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!
What meant she? — Who was she? — Her duty and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation."

WHEN Judith went hastily into the hall with Octopia's note she was at the end of her patience and, as she said, "about ready to drop." She had a strong liking for Olivia, who alone was always kind to her, and for some days the old black's dull thoughts had been of her and of the coil which was gathering about her. At times, too, a dim desire to hurt Octopia — to hurt her physically — arose in the mind of the old black woman.

She turned into the drawing-room, where Olivia was seated with her head in her hands.

"What 's de mattah, honey?" said Judith.

"Oh, I am tired out. I think I should like to go to bed for a week. I wonder you can bear it as you do. Why don't you leave her? Why don't you run away?"

"I reckon I 's too old, Missy Olive. What could an ole woman like me do? I ain't no good, and I jes' could n't do it." She had been too long morally imprisoned to contemplate with pleasure the idea of release.

"Here 's a note for you, missy," she added, and a sudden smile came on her face. "Now, if I was you," she said, "I jes' would run away."

Olivia started. She was that moment thinking how delightful it would be to fly from Octopia.

"Good-by, missy. De Lor bless you!"

As she went out, Olivia mechanically opened the folded slip of paper, and read, —

DEAR COUSIN, — For your sake and hers, do not fail to do your best. Let it be settled before Richard comes back. It must be settled.

Yours, OCTOPIA.

The girl turned the note over. It was addressed to Mrs. Wynne and marked "private."

Olivia leaped to her feet. "What must be settled?" she cried aloud. "This is too — too much! Yes, it shall be settled," she said; and with resolute step she went hastily to her grandmother's room.

She burst in abruptly without knocking; Mrs. Wynne looked up.

"Has she gone?" she said.

"Yes, — forever, I hope. Read that, grandmamma." And she gave her the note. "I opened it by mistake. Oh, read it, — read it," she repeated, impatiently. The meagre, pretty old lady in her chair, calm and passionless, and the flushed, angry, resolute young woman, made a strange contrast.

"Well, dear," said Mrs. Wynne, "sit down and let us talk it over. I meant to speak to you about it."

"No, I can't sit down. What is there to talk over? What does that woman mean about settling it? There is nothing to settle."

"Olivia, you are unreasonable and disrespectful. Do sit down, child."

"Well," she said, seating herself on a stool at the old lady's feet, "what is it?"

"If you talk to me in that way we had better not go on. Girls had good manners in my day. Perhaps you will allow me to speak."

"I am sorry to displease you. I will try to be more pleasant. And do go on, dear grandmamma; I promise not to say a word."

Mrs. Wynne did not find it easy. She hesitated, and at last said feebly, but tenderly, —

"Olive, my child, do you love Richard Darnell?"

"No."

"But you might come to love him in time. Many women learn to love men they did not care about much when they first married. Of course there must be esteem, my dear. I really was not very certain as to whether or not I did really love your grandfather when he married me. Marriage makes such a difference."

Olivia shuddered. "I cannot do it, I will not!"

"Olivia!"

"I hate him!" cried the girl, passionately; "I hate him!" running her hands through her hair in her excitement until the tangled masses of varied brown fell about her face and shoulders.

"Listen to me," said her grandmother. "I am old and weak, and I cannot bear much more. Octopia is hard; she thinks only of her own interests. We are in her power, because she can tell to the world what she knows and what if known will send me to the grave. I could not bear it, nor could you. If you can marry Richard Darnell, she will have some interest to hold her cruel tongue, and I shall have peace."

Olivia looked up, astonished, as a sense of the old lady's selfishness came over her.

"But," she said, "no woman could do such a thing. Octopia is not cruel; she does not mean to be hard. I should feel myself more dishonored by marrying Richard Darnell than by anything she can say."

"You do not know, Olive"—

"Then tell me. Why should we care? We are alone in the world. What does it matter?"

Mrs. Wynne hesitated. "It is about your father." She touched the tenderest spot in Olive's memory.

"Oh, grandmamma, what do you mean?"

"I cannot answer you; indeed, I will not; once for all, I will not. Octopia would be merciless. Can you bear to see your father's name — oh, I cannot tell you! If only you could see it as I do!"

"I could bear anything, grandmamma, except to marry that man. You would not wish that I should willingly sin? It would be a sin if I married him. You will not give me the full means of judging for myself, and I am too young to know whether that is wise or not; but, knowing what I know, I must decide. I will not marry my cousin, and I will face anything Octopia can do first."

"Then you will kill me."

"No."

"What can we do?"

"I will tell you, grandmamma. You have money, and Octopia has none; pay her, and let her go."

"You don't know her. She would never rest satisfied. She would give the money to her brother, and he would spend it."

"And this is the man to whom you would give me!" exclaimed Olive, rising proudly.

"And what am I to say to Octopia?"

"Say nothing." Then she hesitated as a thought ran through her mind. "While you live she will never tell; she will always hope to get what she wants. Let us go away and leave her, — now, at once. You are clever enough to know how to do it; and the world is wide, — wide, grandmamma."

"You are absurd, Olive! How could we go? Where could we go?"

"Oh, anywhere, anywhere! Only say you will go, and we shall manage it; I will manage it."

Mrs. Wynne was amazed at the girl's audacity and enterprise, but to her such a step seemed almost impossible. The numbing palsy of age was on her, the dislike of change, the dread of the new and unfamiliar; but Olivia was passionately possessed of the idea; a great hope was in her soul, and she grew implacably obstinate, putting aside with swift answers every objection. At last she said, —

"It has come to this, grandmamma: either Octopia goes or I go. If you will not listen to me I will go alone."

Mrs. Wynne began to think the girl distraught. Evidently all authority was at an end. Then she yielded a little. All her life she had given way to some one, — her husband, her children, Octopia. It was easier to give way than to resist; and if she threw the whole burden on this inexperienced girl, what more likely than that she would presently come to her with a confession of failure? At length she said, in despair, —

"But suppose we do go away, like two runaway children; she will find us."

"At least we shall have a few weeks of rest, grandmamma." Olivia's face brightened; she saw that she was winning her battle. She had traveled much until she was seventeen, and to move from place to place presented to her no such difficulties as troubled her grandmother. "If," she replied, "she finds us, and of course she will, we shall be no worse off. At all events it will be a respite; and I can endure no longer."

Mrs. Wynne was silent.

"Well?" questioned Olivia.

"Do you think, child, you could really arrange it all?"

"Try me! oh, grandmamma, say yes! — only say yes!"

"And I shall not be worried or troubled?"

"No, I promise you."

"Then have your own way," returned Mrs. Wynne, irritably.

Olivia kissed her and turned aside, her heart filled with unspeakable thankfulness. Then she went down-stairs gayly. A sudden rush of hope-given vitality seemed to flood her being with energy. A joyful sense of adventure was on her, — a need to be instantly doing something.

Accordingly, she collected a number of little bills and went out to pay them; it seemed a step forward. All day long she was in and out of Mrs. Wynne's room, alert and quick, asking questions and so disturbing the old lady that she was nearly distracted. Then she saw their landlady and arranged matters with her. At every new step it seemed to grow easier; and when at last she talked to her grandmother's maid, a young person not much older than Olivia herself, she was delighted to find an easily-won ally. Like Olivia, she was glad of a change, and she only wondered why rich people would stay in New York all summer when they could be elsewhere. She set about packing with an amount of noisy energy that nearly drove poor Mrs. Wynne frantic.

On the following morning Olivia saw her grandmother early. She stood before her with a slip of paper filled with memoranda, inexorable as fate. Mrs. Wynne saw that decision was soon to pass into action.

"What is it now, Olive?" she moaned. "You are worse than Octopia."

"Oh, there are several things."

"Well?"

"I want some money. We shall owe for three months, and it must be paid in advance."

"But we shall get nothing for it. It is mere waste."

"I know; but we shall get freedom. There are some bills, and traveling money," she continued, "and I don't think we ought to leave Octopia penniless."

"Penniless! she has money enough," — which was true. From time to time, on a variety of pretexts, she had extracted from Mrs. Wynne small or larger amounts, or borrowed money which she conveniently forgot to return.

Olivia was surprised, and a little doubtful. "You are sure that she has enough?" she said. "We would not wish her to suffer."

Mrs. Wynne was vaguely conscious that it might not be altogether disagreeable to know that Octopia was uncomfortable. "Make your mind easy about her," she said. "And now I should like to know where you propose to go."

"I was thinking of Cape May. We have been

there before, and Octopia will never suppose we have gone where we had once been."

"You are a clever child, my dear."

"And if it be too noisy, grandmamma, we need not stay there. I was thinking we might go at once up the coast a little way, to some smaller place."

"Gracious, child! it is near August now. Do you suppose we could spend the winter?"

"No, but we might have a couple of months to think what we should do next. It is very quiet at the seaside in the autumn, and no one goes there."

"I will go where you please, if it be not too far." The old lady was utterly subjugated. "But how do you propose to keep Octopia in the dark?"

Olivia laughed. "I am not so silly as to expect that. But let us leave her in the dark for a while at least, grandmamma."

Mrs. Wynne was amused. The idea of Octopia's rage when on her return she should find them gone, none knew where, was maliciously satisfactory. For the first time she began to enter thoroughly into the girl's scheme and to assist her with advice, which she greatly needed. Olivia was delighted.

"You must order all notes and bills and letters to be sent to Mr. Pennell, and the furniture in this room must be stored. You know I value it. We may never come back."

"Never!" said Olivia, gayly. "That would be too good to be true."

"And you must see Mr. Pennell at once, — at once, my dear. Octopia will go to him the moment she arrives. You can do nothing without his help. Send a note and say you will call at his office at three, and take a carriage. Don't go alone. Take my maid."

The girl was shrewd enough to see that the gentleman she was about to interview would regard what she had to say as rather singular, and as she rode to his office she thought over her purpose with care. She knew him well, but hitherto he himself had always come to their rooms, and she looked forward to her visit as a rather formidable enterprise.

She was shown up into a little waiting-room where she sat down and waited for Mr. Pennell, wondering a little what he would say concerning her errand.

By nature shy and gently romantic, his career in life had been singularly modified by the fact that, for reasons unknown to himself, his parents had chosen to label him Addenda Pennell. From the time he could understand this appellative it became a constant source of discomfort and ridicule. A dozen times a month he was sure to be asked why he was called "Addenda," and at school was reminded by some classical jester that he could not possibly have been twins. It was worse in the New York business office to which

he went when a lad. As he grew older and changed his occupation to that of agent for estates, it was somewhat better, and A. Pennell was a sufficient address or signature; but what would have had little effect on a rougher character seriously affected a man too gentle and too shy to endure without annoyance the common contacts of life. To the last he never wrote his name without annoyance and an eager wish that people were left to choose names for themselves at the age of maturity. This natural and acquired timidity kept him more or less free from feminine snares, and, as sentimental as a girl, he lived a lonely life among his books and his business, with only one other engrossing taste.

"Good-morning, Miss Olivia," he said; "but it is really good-evening I meant. Come into my parlor."

Olivia followed him. Her surprise and amusement as she entered were unbounded. A large room surrounded with low book-cases was literally filled with clocks. They were of all ages, all sizes, all forms, from a tiny toy on the window-sill to the tall coffin-like hall clock with its moon-phases and crowning figure of a scythe-bearing Time. On the mantel were exquisite clocks of the date of Marie Antoinette, and on the book-cases marvelous Dutch time-pieces with mechanical figures.

"Oh, Mr. Pennell, how interesting!" exclaimed the girl. "Where *did* you get them all?"

He carefully lifted an old clepsydra from a

chair which he dusted with a red silk handkerchief.

"But I cannot sit down," she said, in reply to his invitation, "until I have seen them all. Why, they are all going!"

"Yes, they 're alive, Miss Olivia," he said, with a sidling nod automatically expressive of his satisfaction and sense of interpretative discovery in clock-physiology.

Olivia quickly understood him. She would some day come to be mistress of the art of pleasing by being interested; and now the world was very fresh to her and there were few things that were not novel. She showed that beautiful springtide of delight which a bright young girl, long shut out from life's gayer scenes, exhibits. Olivia looked curiously from the tall, clean-shaven, awkward man, with his thin, pale cheeks, to the clocks about him. She had the power, not very common, of seeing the agreeably sentimental aspect of things material. It was not absurd to her that he chose to have his clocks alive.

"They are alive," she repeated, to his pleasure. He felt complimented, and began to run about and show her his favorites.

"Now, there 's a clock, Miss Olivia, that never fails me. You can always trust him. That clock has a conscience."

"Oh, I am sure it has," said Olive, with prompt enthusiasm.

"And how differently they talk!" Indeed, the

click-cluck and tick-tack made a queer chorus. "This one stutters," he added. "But now they are going to strike four." And as he spoke, they broke out all around her in tones of divers character, — sweet, clear, harsh, clamorous, modestly faint, — while Addenda Pennell stood in rapt enjoyment.

"They did that better than usual," he said, — "all but that silly fool in the corner. She 's always a little slow."

"They seem to you like friends," said Olivia.

"Yes. We don't appreciate clocks. They are very impartial. They are good counselors. They never want to lie. And then they are very interesting as characters. Now, here is one I call Arthur Wynne. It 's exactly like your father. You don't mind my saying it is like your father?" he added, blushing, and twisting his hands, of which he was apt to become seriously conscious when embarrassed. "My clocks are not all like people. We must be like clocks to our great Maker, Miss Olivia. Now, this clock is old English, — Wagstaffe, London. It is honest and punctual, but now and then gets crooked and has crochets. I just let it alone, and it comes right of itself."

"That reminds me," said the girl, "to ask you something. You knew my father well?"

"I should think I did."

"What did he die of?"

"Pneumonia, I believe. Why do you ask that, my dear? There was some brain-trouble, too.

You know his affairs were in great confusion, and he was much depressed in mind when I last saw him. He greatly overrated the idea of disgrace which some men connect with bankruptcy."

"There was no — no disgrace?"

"None whatsoever. I do not say there was not neglect. He felt that very keenly."

"I see. Poor father!" And she stood in grave thought, while the clocks ticked on solemnly around her.

"I loved him well, Miss Olivia. He was the gentlest of gentlemen. He — he was the only man I ever knew that did not laugh at my name."

"I think it suits you nicely," said Olivia, and then, in a sort of absent way, as if speaking to herself, "it has a pleasant softness about it, — Addenda."

Pennell would have liked to get on his knees to thank her. It *had* an agreeable sound as she spoke it. "Thank you," he said, simply. She had him for a vassal thenceforward.

"I have been altogether forgetful of my business, Mr. Pennell. I shall have to make a rather awkward explanation; but grandmamma dislikes trouble, and perhaps you won't approve; and she thinks so much of your judgment."

"What is it?"

She hesitated.

"Well, Miss Olivia?"

"It is just this: Octopia has become unendurable; and I must go away somewhere. I can bear it no longer."

"Let us sit down," he said. "This is serious. I knew, Miss Olivia, that you had difficulties, but I also know that Miss Darnell is ill and wretched, and at times feels too acutely her dependent condition. When your father was dying, no nurse could have been more tender than she. Let me ask you, as an old friend, if you have considered all this?"

"I have tried to do so; but the more I think about it the more I see I can't go on much longer. If I am altogether wrong I had better be away from her."

Pennell was on both sides in this question. That the girl was unhappy and breaking in health was quite clear to him. That Octopia Darnell, gentle, sensitive, gracious, could be the sole cause of this misery did not seem to him possible.

"I can't understand it," he said. "Miss Darnell has the highest opinion of you. I scarcely ever see her that she does not speak of your kindness, of your unselfish devotion to her; and you must know that to leave abruptly without a word of warning would hurt her dreadfully. Were she rich and independent, it might matter less. Think how you would feel if you were placed as she is."

He was innocently arguing the case for the side on which his heart held a brief.

Olivia paused, reflected, and at last, looking at the tall, earnest man, who had quite lost his shyness, said, —

"I don't think I could make it clear to you with-

out trying to make you understand my cousin. I hardly know how to do it. I don't want to make you think ill of her."

"Oh, no, no!" he exclaimed. "There are good people who somehow can't live together."

"Well, she and I must be two of those good people, Mr. Pennell."

Olivia was glad of this exit from her difficulty, and went on more easily. "No matter who is wrong, of late things have become dreadful, and —and — there are other reasons. I have persuaded grandmamma to go away for a while. If Cousin Octopia knows where we have gone, she will follow us at once. I did not tell grandmamma, but I thought that if you would not let Miss Darnell know where we are for a few weeks I should get well enough to go on again."

"I don't like it," he said. "It is not the kind of thing you ought to do or I ought to aid."

"Well, I am sorry. Then we will go alone. Go we must."

"But you can't go alone. Imagine Miss Darnell asking me where you are." He foresaw his intense embarrassments.

"Then help us. Do as I say; give me three weeks of rest. I can't go on as things are; the house is full of mysteries. I sometimes think Octopia frightens grandmamma; and, besides" —

"Well, what? It is all very strange to me, — very, — and I have known you since you were a child. What besides?"

"I cannot tell you. If you do not say 'yes,' I will go alone, — somewhere, anywhere," she said, excitedly.

He began to understand a little, and perhaps also did not quite dislike the idea of Miss Darnell cast as it were on his kindness for care and attention. He would promptly have rejected the thought that this aspect of the case in any way influenced him; yet it did.

"If you will release me after three weeks, I will promise what you wish. I must say, however, that I think it childish and foolish."

He had calculated that if, as usual, Miss Darnell should be absent two weeks, he would not be called on to answer save for the week to follow, and as to this delays were possible. He said he would do it.

Then she rose. Addenda Pennell would keep his word, and for a time at least she would be free from care.

"Thank you," she said, and told him their plans. "And now," she added, smiling, "I am a naughty clock. Do your clocks ever want to know?"

"They are friends who do not ask questions."

"Only one," she returned, — "only one. Is there — was there anything wrong about my father's illness or his death?"

"Nothing," said Pennell, firmly, as he walked away towards the window. There are lies white, gray, and black; Pennell had told her one which

was for the moment golden in his eyes. His recognition of the color of untruths was for a moment blurred by a stern sense of necessity. The next minute he wished he had not lied.

"You have greatly comforted me," she said, thanking him in warm words with an honest hand-grasp and a face which did the errand of her heart yet more graciously.

As she turned to leave, he said, —

"You have tried me very sorely, my little woman, more sorely than you know or can imagine." He was thinking of Octopia.

"And you have been very good to me," she said.

"And bad to myself. But good-by. Look at that old Sèvres clock, Miss Olivia. I am keeping it as a wedding-present for a friend of mine."

"When I know her I shall tell her to thank you." And she laughed. "But there is one awful liar among your clocks. It has stopped at eleven."

"That is our old home clock," he answered, hastily. "It stopped — I stopped it at a certain hour of my life which I want to have always recalled to me. A man has cruel hours, Miss Olivia, which yet God does not want him to forget. That clock always reminds me."

"How strange!" she said.

"Your father was very good to me in that dark hour; I have never forgotten it. I ought not to have mentioned it; but you are so like him, it

seems to me as if it were one way of thanking him to tell you how good he was. Let it be a little secret for us two," and he smiled sadly.

"Thank you again," she said, and put out both hands, and so went away, thoughtful and full of wonder.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Could I do this I should my soul defile.
Thou dost forget I love thee; Love hath debts
To all the virtues. He who loveth thee
Should more esteem himself that he doth love,
And double guard his honor."

THE Iron Wedding of the States was over. For good or for ill, they were one again.

The Confederacy had collapsed. Everywhere, with the coming of the hopeful buds of spring, the gallant soldiers of the South threw down their arms and returned to the plough and the plantation. During May and June the work of mustering out a million of Northern men went on rapidly.

By the end of July Blake found himself a free man, and a little later his friend Francis wrote to him that he too was out of service. "Before you settle to any work," he said, "let us have a good holiday. Come to Philadelphia and join me. We will go somewhere and be idle for a while and our own masters. I am sure we both need a rest."

This note went to Blake's New England home, and found him, late in August, living quietly with his aunt. He was tired of the red tape of the muster-out, and still not quite free from the malaria he had acquired on the Chickahominy. He

made up his mind to join his friend; but first there was something on his mind which troubled him, and which, as he reflected about it, assumed for him the force of a duty. He asked himself over and over whether he was in any way bound to protect society against a man like Darnell. Had the problem remained in this vague form he might and probably would have rested content to do nothing and to say nothing. But Francis's adventure in New York, while it merely amused that smiling gentleman, interested and excited Roland Blake. He felt himself curiously responsible for the rascal who had tried to kill him and whose life he had saved. To some extent his tongue was tied; that, at least, was clear; but it was possible to say something without breaking his pledge. Was it his duty to say it? Was he under an obligation to find these two women, who might already have suffered through unavoidable delay, and warn them?

Being a young man still, and with a pleasant background of wholesome chivalry in his composition, the romance of the matter influenced him far more than he knew. He tried to put aside the feeling of having been personally wronged, but no doubt it also had a share in his final conviction that he must do something.

Action was never far behind decision with Blake, and in a few hours he was on his way to New York, having written to Francis that he would join him towards the end of the week.

Thus it happened that two persons were at the same time equally interested in finding Mrs. Wynne and Olivia.

Octopia's brother after a week's absence returned to New York, and found, to his unbounded amazement, that his cousins had left without a trace. His hasty telegram brought back Octopia with but small delay.

"I told you so," he said. "It was pure folly to leave them. And now what do you mean to do about it?" Their flight more than anything else made him believe in the power over them which Octopia affected to possess, but the value of which he had always doubted.

Judith alone was delighed, and felt the grim satisfaction of the man who has lighted the fuse and at safe distance contemplates the consequences.

Octopia at once rose to better health and large possibilities of action, as do such sick persons in the presence of an emergency which threatens their comfort. She went first to Mrs. Wynne's rooms, and then to Olivia's. Still feeble, she wore herself out in a careful search for some evidence of the direction of their flight. No trace was left. Mrs. Wynne's furniture was stored in an attic, and was to remain, Octopia learned, until reclaimed.

At last, exhausted, Miss Darnell sank upon a lounge and for the tenth time read the note from Mrs. Wynne which was handed to her on her

return. When first she saw that it was in Olivia's handwriting it annoyed her, and now that it became clear that their flight had been well managed and with decision and skill, the annoyance gave place to a storm of resentment. She saw in the firm lines of the letter something which dangerously lifted her anger into the region of criminal possibilities. Her long dream of power was over, her hold on the girl lost. To realize the extent of her own failure to read Olivia correctly was intolerable to her self-esteem.

For a moment all the disappointments of a life rose and smote her with the scourges of bitter memories. A foolish, willful desire to show her power had lost her long years back a good man's love. "And I loved him so! I loved him so!" she murmured, twisting the paper in her hands, "and Dick is like — so like him! Oh, there are times when Dick's eyes kill me! But he was better than poor Dick," she added, remembering the waste of his money and her own, the wild squandering, the gambling and ruin, with her gradual failure of health. Then at last she recalled how she had come at Arthur Wynne's call, how well she had cared for him and his. "And they never realized what I did. Why have they left me? I only helped her do for me what gratitude ought to have taught her to do. They have been mean! — mean!"

She felt that now she could and would be cruel. The engineer speaks of the breaking-strain in

material: the breaking-strain in morals was near for Octopia.

She sat down and reflected quietly; then a smile lit up her face, and she went to find her brother. She told him that her note informed her that the rooms were hers for three months to come, and that she had a little over five thousand dollars laid by, — a fact which both surprised and consoled him. Then, with unusual energy, she explained to him that he was to take certain steps to find out the whereabouts of Mrs. Wynne, and at last wrote a note to Mr. Pennell, which she desired Darnell to mail at once.

The day after was one which poor Judith long remembered.

At eleven she was called on to assist at the first elaborate toilet she had seen Octopia make for years.

At lunch Miss Darnell took, what was unusual for her, a little wine, and then went down to await Addenda Pennell. He came shyly into the room, dressed, as Octopia saw, with singular care, a rose in his button-hole. He would have liked to stay away, knowing and fearing the trial before him, but the temptation was too great for him. A plain man with poetic instincts, he admired the grace and elegance of Octopia and her ease of manner. He had known her as a trial to other women, but while in a large-hearted kindness of judgment he had believed that to an irritable old lady and an inexperienced girl she might be a

weariness, he felt that, to one who loved her, much might be possible. He felt that she had not always been as just and tender to Mrs. Wynne as she might have been if well; but there was that in his own life which filled him with pitying hope for all who had strayed from the way which is narrow; and, above all, he loved her, — loved her with a force which the mild scorn with which she always treated him did not prevent him from excusing out of the depths of his own remarkable sense of humble self-depreciation.

As he advanced he saw with pleasure the long, lithe figure, the nervous, drooping hands, the small thin foot neatly slippered, the languid eyes, and the well-modeled lips now smiling a welcome.

"I am punctual, I think, Miss Darnell. I suspect that your clock is wrong. How glad I am to see you looking so very much better!"

"I am better," she said. "Even a week at Richfield helps me. I have sent for you, as my only friend, to ask your help. You know what I did for my cousins; you know that in their service I made myself the mere wreck I am; and now you know — I suppose you know — why I want you."

Addenda Pennell felt weak and a little alarmed. He had stood at first, but while she was speaking he was glad to sit down. Then as she went on he brushed his hat with one hand.

"You have never failed me," she said. She put out her long pale hand to him. He took it.

"I am alone now," she added, softly. "They have left me. Tell me where they are."

He looked at her wistfully and sadly. "I cannot," he said.

Octopia withdrew her hand. "And why can you not?"

"Because it would not be right. I made a foolish promise not to say where they have gone. In ten days I can tell you. You, of all women, would not wish me to break my word?"

"But it is perfectly absurd."

"Yes, I know that. You can't put it too strongly."

"And it is of them I think, more than of myself."

"I am sure that you try always to think of others first."

"Olive is unfit to take care of her grandmother; I have seen enough in the past to be sure of that, and a man of your age, or rather of your judgment, must know this as well as I do. She is hasty and ill-tempered, and not as thoughtful as one could wish. Of course you, who did not live with them, cannot be expected to realize all this as I do. Now, as a rational being, do you not see that I am right?"

"It may be — I — I dare say you may be correct; but what can I do?"

"Ah," she said, her head drooping as if in despair, "if only there were any one I could turn to! There are none! — none! Have you no pity

for me, who am left by a girl's whim stranded, a sick, suffering woman? Mrs. Wynne never could have meant both to hurt and insult me. If I could see her a moment she would surely say so."

"Let me help you, Miss Darnell. You must know I would do anything to help you but this. It — it — you won't mind my saying that it hurts me to think you want to tempt me, even in so small a matter, to do what I do not think right."

"It is not wrong."

"Yes," he returned, mournfully, "it is wrong. I cannot do it, — not even for you."

"And how, then, do you propose to help me? Your friendship seems to me of little value."

"If — if you could let me" —

Octopia understood him, with a woman's quick perception. His increasing embarrassment left her in no doubt. It was not the first time he had put his heart in her power. She knew that he was rich and kind, and that he loved her; she was poor, weak, and relied little on her brother for any continuity of care, and he too had nothing. But, despite his faults, he had been her one constant attachment, her ideal of a brave, reckless gentleman. To him she could not be treacherous or indifferent, and she believed that she could yet overcome her cousin's opposition, which, in the remembrance of constant victories, she underestimated.

She rose to her feet. "You are very good to me," she said. "I do not profess to misunder-

stand you, and I thank you, — as a lonely, sad, feeble woman, I thank you. But I am unfit to win any man's love. I am a burden to myself. I could not willingly let another share my weariness."

"But you do not know me. I have had no one to love since I was a boy. My heart is empty; come and fill it. Ah, I should care well for you."

She began to realize the depth and gentleness of the man, and was touched by them.

"I am not young," she said. "And I cannot say that I love you."

"I would not wish you to say that if you do not feel it; but, with God's help, I might hope that you would."

Octopia was thoroughly moved. All power pleased her; all affection was grateful. For a moment she hesitated; then she said, —

"If I knew where they were, I should be easier in mind. I cannot think now; I cannot decide. Oh, if I knew, everything might be easy, everything" — and she paused.

Her lover had risen when she rose; now he fell back and looked at her, an awful sadness in his simple, honest heart.

"I don't think I quite understand you. You cannot mean to bribe me to do what is wrong in my sight? Forgive me for thinking it. You can't mean that?"

"I mean if you love me you will tell me," she cried, passionately.

"My God!" he said. His head dropped, his hands fell at his side. "Good-by," he added, and deliberately, like an automaton, walked out of the room.

Left alone with her motives, she could not get away from the remembrance that Pennell was a man of low birth. What Dick would think was always with her. If she had loved Pennell, all this would have been trivial, because when she wanted anything she ceased to see obstacles. But she did not care for him, and only felt as fit and agreeable, and yet a little absurd, his desire to win her. If only Dick could marry Olive there would be no need to think further of Pennell. And yet how kind he was, and Dick at times of late how hard!

In the entry, at the hall door, Pennell became aware that he had left his hat in the drawing-room. Reluctantly he went back. Octopia was seated, her face in her hands, crying. He took his hat from the chair.

"Miss Darnell," he said, "won't you" —

Without looking up, she raised a hand and motioned him to be gone. Then she heard the hall door close. She was alone.

Men make thoughtful sacrifices of self; in women self-devotion has the strength and automatism of an instinct.

CHAPTER XX.

"How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself — to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!"

Octopia was cheating herself with the idea that for the sake of Richard Darnell she had put aside wealth and insurance of home and comfort and an honest love. She sat up and smiled and was pleased with herself because she had done it, and wondered if Dick would have liked her to marry Mr. Pennell. Pride of birth was strong in both sister and brother, and as they had fallen in the world it became yet more distinct, — a possession of which no adversity could deprive them. They were Darnells, whatever happened.

The woman reflected, as women not young sometimes do, as to what motives had influenced the love just laid at her feet. It seemed to her natural that an unknown Yankee estate-agent should wish to marry a woman of assured social place; but what else?

She had been seated, clasping her knees and looking as if into distance — an interesting face and figure. The last reflection took her to the mirror between the windows. Yes, she was surely a woman not to be passed by without notice. With

her recent shock of discovery that her victims had fled, some of her former energy had come back. Vigorous motives for action had been, as usual, potent moral tonics, and had influenced no less her physical condition. She smiled to see that she was not so thin as formerly, and that there was more color in her cheeks. There were still reasons why men should admire her, and therefore why Pennell might.

She thought of the tall, stooping man, with his shy ways, and then of Olivia addressing a letter to her as Mrs. Addenda Pennell.

"Ah, Dick!" she said, looking round at her brother, who had just entered the room. "Have you any news? How ridiculous it was for those two geese to fly away so mysteriously!"

"Nonsense, Octy!" said he: "don't do any of your little dramatic performances for me. You want to find them for reasons of your own. I must find that girl; I *will* find her, too. She shall marry me if man can compass it."

"Or woman either, Dick. Be sure that what I want most is to help you; and," she added, with confident pride, "I can help you; I know I can."

"You are very good, Octy, but just now it does not seem very clear; I really *can't* understand Olivia. What did Pennell say? Queer old Yankee, is n't he?"

"He knows, but will not tell me anything. I really did my best."

"Well, what else?"

"Oh, you will laugh."

"Why, what is there to laugh at? I feel confoundedly little like laughing."

"He wants to marry me, Dick."

"Not really?"

"Why not?" said Octopia, annoyed.

"Oh, nothing."

"Then why did you speak as you did?"

"I was thinking it was strange that a woman like you could not get out of a man like that, who wants you to marry him, so small a secret as where two foolish women have gone for a holiday."

"I did my best, brother," she returned, growing pale as she spoke. "The man is a good man."

"Oh, I dare say. But what did you say?"

"I said 'no.'"

"Why did you say 'no,' if he is, as you say, so good, and if, as I hear, he is good as to his bank-account?"

She looked at him curiously, the little muscles about her chin twitching. "He would not tell me what I wanted to know."

"But suppose you had said 'yes.' Men are great fools, Octy."

He knew well how often a false love had shorn the locks of honesty or honor.

She was silent, and for a moment could not tell just why the proposition shocked her more than what she had herself meant to do. It was, in truth, because the idea came from her brother, whom she was forever struggling to preserve as

her ideal gentleman. He, in his passion of disappointed love, was getting recklessly careless of her opinion.

"Do you forget that we are Darnells, Dick?" she said.

"By George, Octy, I thought you had more sense! Whether you go so far as to marry him or not is a question for the future."

Octopia sat down, an awful consciousness of her brother's selfishness ruthlessly confronting her. "I don't think I could do it, Dick."

"Then you are a bigger fool than I took you to be," he answered, roughly.

"Oh, Dick! — brother!"

"Well, I don't mean all I say, Octy." And with this he sat down and kissed her cheek. He knew well how much she liked demonstrative affection, and that she could not be angry very long with him.

At last he stood up and said he had spoken hastily; he would leave her to do as seemed best to her, and added that she was getting her old looks back. Then she too rose wearily, and said there was no hurry about finding out where Mrs. Wynne was, and that something would turn up; upon which he kissed her again and went out.

Already she missed Olivia. Now there was no one on whose little charities she could call, no one whom she could drag within the morbid circle of her own demands for sympathy. She felt the results of her talk with Pennell and with her brother

in an attack of intense fatigue of mind and body and in a desire to give way to one of her volcanic emotional explosions. Having no one to summon as audience, she controlled herself; but a fierce feeling of having been wronged arose in her mind, and the demon of wrath at last expelled all his lesser brethren and remained in sullen possession.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I had not stayed so long to tell you all,
But while I mused came Memory with sad eyes,
Holding the folded annals of my youth."

ADDENDA PENNELL went down Fifth Avenue a thoughtful man. Once his name on a house to let or sell here or there had given him a sense of business pride; but that day had gone by; his clerks looked after these smaller matters.

A life of absolute honesty and of great accuracy and tranquil judgment in real estate had made him rich and trusted. He was away from it all and in his other life as he walked down the avenue. He had long thought about Miss Darnell as of a woman suffering and graceful and refined; as of one poor and dependent yet proud and sensitive. She would have been surprised could she have known that her social position made no appeal to him. His embarrassments were personal, and no mere class distinctions would have emphasized them. He had the best New England simplicity as to these matters, and had reached the true American ideal of belief that the form of labor does not degrade.

Presently he nearly ran against a young man, who excused himself and went on his way. Something about him attracted Pennell, and, look-

ing back, he saw him go up the steps of the house Pennell had left.

A few moments later Roland Blake stood in the entry. He took out a card, asking if Mrs. Wynne were at home. The servant replied that Mrs. Wynne and her daughter had gone to the country; he did not know where they were; but Miss Darnell was in the parlor, perhaps she could tell him. The name struck the visitor with surprise. Then he hesitated, but at last gave the servant a card, saying, —

"Ask Miss Darnell if she will see me."

In a moment the man came back, and, throwing open the door, drew back as Blake went in.

Octopia was standing with his card in her hand.

"Miss Darnell, I believe," he said.

"I am Miss Darnell. To what do I owe the honor of this visit?" There was a faintly disagreeable tone in her mannered speech which Blake could not understand, but which was due to the fact that she was already in an irritable mood and that he was a Northern officer.

She did not ask him to sit down, and as she stood, her face struck him as having something foreign and peculiar in its lineaments.

"I have called," he said, "to learn where I could find Mrs. Wynne."

"May I ask what is your business with my cousin? She is out of town."

"So I have just heard. Will you kindly tell me where I can find her? As to my business, you

will pardon me if I say that it is of a personal nature."

"Indeed!" Octopia began to be interested. "She is a very old lady, a really aged woman; and, as I am almost her only relative, I shall be glad to be the means of letting her know whatever you may wish to say."

"I scarcely think I can delegate my business. Would you kindly give me her address?"

"I do not know it at present."

"Then I am sorry to have troubled you. Good-morning."

"Good-morning," she returned, coldly.

He went out with a vague impression that it was rather odd that this woman with the graceful, languid air and interesting face should know so little of her cousin's whereabouts. After leaving the house he thought a moment, and, returning, rang the bell.

"Do you know," he said to the servant, "any one who can tell me where I can find Mrs. Wynne? Miss Darnell cannot tell me. Is there any one else?"

"Mr. Pennell might know, sir."

"And who is he? where does he live?"

"He is some kind of business-man for Mrs. Wynne. I don't know where he lives; but I can ask Miss Darnell."

"No; it is of no moment. Pennell — Pennell. Thank you."

With an unusual name and a partial knowledge

of its owner's occupation, it was easy enough to find Mr. Pennell.

When Richard Darnell saw Blake's card on the table he expressed his regret at having missed him, and was Octopia sure he had not mentioned her brother? The visit puzzled them both.

Passing the clerks and their desks, Blake was shown into Mr. Pennell's railed-off inclosure at the back of the real-estate office. He was at his desk, and surrounded by papers. Instead of speaking to the new-comer from his seat, after the fashion of American commercial manners, Pennell rose, and, looking from the young man's card to his brown face with its pleasant serenity of expression and its strength of feature, was agreeably impressed.

"Major Blake," he said,— "Third New Hampshire Volunteers, I see by your card. Why, that's my State, major; and the Third was raised down Portsmouth way. I am glad to see you. Sit down."

The war and all its soldiers were sources of enthusiastic admiration to Pennell, and now he quite forgot his shyness in the pleasure of seeing an officer with whose belongings he felt some familiarity.

"Are you, too, Portsmouth-born?" inquired Blake.

"Yes, sir; I am glad to say I am, born and bred, and my father before me. I don't think I ever would have got away from there if it had n't

been that no man but my father could make a comfortable shoe for Arthur Wynne."

Blake was attracted by the combination of embarrassment of manner and simple frankness of speech. Men's careers and their biographies interested him always, and he saw, too, that the agent found pleasure in the remembrance of the old town. "I was stupid not to recall your name as familiar," said he. "But I have seen little of the good old place for some years."

"You might remember my uncle, major. He has father's shop still. I might have been happier to-day over my last, thinking, and looking out at the bee-hives in the apple-orchard. The rain-butt was right under the window where I used to cut out uppers; I fell into it once when I was a little chap."

Then Pennell reddened as he looked around him at the clerks and reflected with a trace of annoyance that he was becoming biographical. "I beg pardon," he added, "I was so glad to see a Portsmouth man and a soldier that I have kept you standing while I talked about myself. Sit down. Pray, what can I do for you, major?" He felt a gentle partner-like ownership in the title.

"I certainly have a little, a very little, matter to ask about, but you won't mind if I say that you left off with the rain-butt. You spoke of Mr. Wynne."

"Yes; I used to take the shoes home, and as the Wynnes lived near Boar's Head in summer,

it was a good seven-mile tramp. Somehow, Mr. Wynne took a fancy to me; you can't explain those things, you know. The end was, he brought Brother Joe and me up to the works near Newark." Then Addenda paused. "That man was inconceivably kind to me and Joe, and just; no man was ever so just." Some unrevealed memory of a distant past evidently had him in its grip. He turned from it abruptly.

"However, here I am, and at your disposal."

"I am really obliged to you. I am a young man, with my own way to make, and what you were good enough to tell me makes success seem more possible. Just now it is like a real help. You see, sir, I have lost four years in the war" —

"No, sir! you have gained four. I would give a good bit of the end of life to have had those four years of yours."

"You are quite right," returned Blake, "and I was wrong. I know that the war has helped me in many ways. Even the steady discipline was, I can see, of use to many of us young Yankees. It was pretty hard, though, sometimes."

"Who nobly serves is master," said the agent, and then became suddenly ill at ease, as he always was when a bit of the poetry of his inner life slipped out among his commercial surroundings.

His visitor did not show the surprise he felt, as he glanced at the pleasant face, and then at the desks, and the clerks, and the people coming and going, and the litter of bills and posters, and all

the other evidences of active business prosperity and mercantile method.

Pennell instantly added, "But I am keeping you, — and myself too, I may say. Now for business. What is it?"

Blake had at first meant merely to ask for Mrs. Wynne's address; but what he had seen of Mr. Pennell somewhat enlarged his views as to that which it might be well to say in case of difficulty in coming into closer relation with that lady.

He looked about him. "Could we talk more in private?" he said.

"Certainly. Come up-stairs."

And so it chanced that presently Blake stood among the clocks, as Olivia had done some two weeks before. "What a quaint nature this must be!" thought he.

"Is our talk to be a long one, major?"

"I can hardly say. That depends on circumstances."

"Then will you excuse me for five or ten minutes? After that I am at your disposal."

Blake said he had nothing to do, and begged his host not to hurry himself. Then Pennell said, "There are the papers," and went out of the room.

Blake glanced around at the clocks, big and little, with vast amusement at their exactness of statement as to the hour, and presently began to look for the times of departure of the Philadelphia trains. The "Herald" he turned over was dis-

figured by having two or three slips cut out of the columns. A duplicate copy lay beside him on the table, and after satisfying himself as to the trains, he chanced to notice in the unmutilated journal that the slips cut out were records of small commercial failures or of defalcations and breaches of trust on the part of clerks or petty bank-officers. The "Heralds" and "Tribunes" were of various recent dates, but all had been used in the same manner. Whoever had made the selections seemed to have had a mania for collecting records of such minor offenses as those just mentioned. It certainly seemed to Roland Blake a very morbid taste, and one which did not look natural in so business-like and simple a being as Pennell.

His cogitations were arrested by the return of the agent, who said, —

"Now, major, I am free for a half hour."

"My errand may be a very easy one. You mentioned the name of Mr. Wynne while we were talking down-stairs. What I want is to know where I can find Mrs. Wynne."

"His mother, I suppose you mean. His wife is dead and he is dead. Mrs. Wynne is away in the country."

He saw no reason why he should not say where she was, but his natural caution in all transactions returned when Roland Blake replied, —

"Yes; I learned at their house from Miss Darnell that Mrs. Wynne was absent, and that Miss Darnell did not know where she was. The servant referred me to you."

"You knew Miss Darnell, then?"

"No," said Blake, "I did not."

He wondered why Pennell should have asked him this, and began to feel puzzled. That the agent spoke with a shade of reluctance was plain.

"You will think it odd," said Pennell, "if I ask you why you want to see Mrs. Wynne. She is a very aged woman, and I have long been her adviser and agent. In any business matter I am the proper person to talk to."

"But it is not a business matter; it is altogether personal, and, I may as well say, of such a nature as makes me a little undecided as to whether I am wise to do what it seems to me my duty to do."

"You must see, major, that you put me in a rather awkward position."

"I confess I do not see that."

"Mrs. Wynne is away with Miss Olivia, and desires no one to know where she has gone. That may seem strange to you; but I think best to say so. As to her motives for this I need add nothing: it is a family affair. Cannot you make it easier for me in some way?"

Blake hesitated. "What I have to say to her may be of no moment, or it may be of invaluable service. It concerns a relative of hers."

"Not Miss Darnell?"

"No; a Mr. Darnell, — Mr. Richard Darnell."

"Miss Darnell's brother."

"Indeed!"

Addenda Pennell did not like it. He knew Richard Darnell, but chiefly as a Southern gentleman who had been a prisoner and who spent altogether too much money. But he also knew how profoundly Octopia loved him. He at once resolved that he would at least postpone the matter. He would rather know more of Richard Darnell first; and his extreme caution in business matters and his love for Darnell's sister alike indisposed him to disobey Mrs. Wynne.

"I am afraid," he said, as he rose, "that I cannot help you. I will write to Mrs. Wynne. Meanwhile, should you feel disposed to be more frank, let me hear from you. Here is my card." As he spoke, he looked about on the table, and not finding what he sought, seized a single sheet of ruled commercial note-paper, wrote "Addenda Pennell, No. 93 Ogden St.," tore off the scrap, and gave it to Blake, who folded it and put it in his pocket-book, saying, "I am sorry, sir, you can do no more for me. You have only delayed my errand."

"Well, I am sorry too. I may be over-cautious; but before we part let me say that when you are here again I shall be most glad to see you. I may change my mind, you know."

"I shall be glad to call," said Blake, and went away with the feeling that somehow he must have mismanaged the matter, and that it might have been well to speak more freely.

If he had begun to do so, he would have realized

the difficulty in which he was placed by his double view of official and personal obligations and of his duty to people whom he had never seen. Then, too, he had been put on his guard by the evident annoyance of Pennell at his mention of Miss Darnell.

As he sat in the railroad-car next day, thinking with amusement and with a feeling of sentimental interest of his little quest and its romantic aspects, he suddenly recalled the wonder with which he had read the name Addenda. He took out the paper on which the agent had written his address, and for a moment was puzzled. It was the upper half of a page of note-paper, and was evidently an unfinished note. It began, —

DEAR MISS OLIVIA, — I begin to think you have been rather hasty. Your poor cousin is in the utmost distress —

Here it was torn off; but above was written, in the agent's formal handwriting, "To Miss Olivia Wynne, Cape May Court-house." On the opposite side was Pennell's address.

The young major broke out into an honest laugh, which caused two or three passengers to regard him curiously for a moment over the tops of their morning papers.

"By George! what a delicious fluke!" said Blake to himself, wishing he could see Mr. Addenda Pennell at the moment when he should sit

down to finish that note. In fact, Mr. Pennell had made one of those bewildering slips to which the over-prudent are liable.

The line or two yet left of the note made it appear, as far as Roland could make out, that Mrs. Wynne had left home for some cause of which Miss Darnell was a part. There was a certain romance about this quest which began to make it an agreeable duty. It grew a more emphatic duty as it became a more pleasant one. Even our virtues masquerade at times. As Blake whirled over the old red sandstone of New Jersey and anon across its breadth of sands he sat wondering where Miss Wynne might be, and whether his friend had not over-drawn his pretty pastel of the drawing-room scene. He laughed at last as he suddenly discovered that it would be unpleasant to find the young woman uncomely.

When next day he dined at Mr. John Francis' on Walnut Street, he had grown moody and thoughtful, and did little justice to Philip's many glowing eulogiums on this marvel among friends. Miss Francis found him quiet, and twitted Philip after breakfast next day about the social failure of his friend.

"Now, really, Phil," she said, "when a man has but one swan in his goose-pond, it is rather sad to hear a treacherous quack, quack." She declared that this was the end of her earthly illusions.

Mr. John Francis also did not find the major

very entertaining, and said so, but would always be glad to see Phil's friend, and in fact did give him his best Madeira.

As Blake was Philip's sole human enthusiasm, although he cynically hid his admiration from its object, he told his sister she had lived too long in Philadelphia to know a clever man from a dull man, and then put his hat on very hard and went out, disgusted, to meet his friend at the club.

The charges made were more or less just. Roland Blake had one of the mental peculiarities which insure success; if he was at all interested in an enterprise, small or large, he could never get away from it, and it absorbed his attention so as to affect for a time his really pleasant social qualities and to make him seem absent and preoccupied.

Francis found him in this mood after breakfast, sitting deep in thought in the smoking-room of the club. It was a warm September morning, and the club was as empty as usual at that time. Blake was looking out of a window at the rather sombre and rigid formality of the white door-steps and brick fronts of the houses across the way. A long column of disbanded soldiers homeward bound was moving gayly westward on the opposite pavement. Suddenly he felt a hand on his shoulder, and heard Francis saying, —

"What are you mooning about, old man?"

"Oh, it 's you, Phil! I was thinking how impersonal modern wars are; how little dislike or hate there is nowadays between two armies."

"How about Darnell?" said Francis, mischievously.

"Oh, confound Darnell!"

"Very impersonal, that! Perhaps you won't care to learn that I heard from him last week. He is still at the North, and wants very much to meet you."

"I dare say he does. I cannot say that I am equally desirous to meet him."

"I heard that he was in New York."

"Is he, indeed?"

"What a mysterious fellow you are! Now, it seems to me that I should really like to see that man if I were in your place."

"Well, you are not, Phil, and that is all there is of it. There is in my conduct about this man something which is and must remain unexplained. I have already told you this. Let me add that I have ample cause to know that he is a scoundrel."

"Good gracious, Roland! I have a general belief in the scampishness of mankind, but you seem to have a keener nose for it than I have. At all events, he will be here early this fall, and how I am to receive him, after what you tell me, I do not see."

"I wish I could help you further; but I cannot. When do we go?"

"Oh, I came early to tell you that I shall be detained here for a while, a week or so, at least. After that I will join you."

"Very well. Do you know a quiet place on the coast called Cape May Court-house?"

"I have heard of it."

"I shall take my guns and fishing-traps and go there to-day. Come as soon as you can."

"It will be ghastly dull."

"But you will have me," said Blake, laughing.

"Well, you have n't been as genial of late as might be desired. And I can't even get a row out of you. You are undergoing moral atrophy from disuse of your passions. What you want is a love-affair."

"Try it yourself, my good doctor."

"I can't. Even homœopathic doses of femininity disagree with me. Oh, don't laugh, Roland. I 've tried it. My heart is like Noah's dove; it always comes back to my own little ark."

"You had better read Genesis again, Phil, before you use it to illustrate your biography. Must you go?"

"Yes."

"Well, come down as soon as you can."

CHAPTER XXII.

"Thereon my lady, who was young and fair,
And yearning for some heart-hold upon life,
Like the loosed tendril of a wind-blown vine
That seeks, and knows not why, smiled once again,
And blossomed like a rose surprised of June."

It was dusk when Mrs. Wynne and Olivia turned out of the deep, sandy New Jersey road, and the lanky, sinewy horses were pulled up in front of the small village inn. They had tried the noisy hotels of Cape May for three weeks, and the old lady had declared that they were worse than Octopia. The comings and goings of people, the constant footsteps in the carpetless corridors, the tumult of the band, and the steady roar of the breakers became insupportable. She said at last that she must have quiet, and if she did not she would go back to New York and Olivia might do as she pleased.

Olivia was in despair. She did not like the place. Her training and natural reserve of course prevented her from making acquaintances. When the porticoes were most deserted, she sat alone, or ventured a little way up the beach to sketch; but people came and looked over her shoulders; and men stared with ill-concealed admiration at the tall, lonely girl who seemed to have no friends.

At times she took refuge with Mrs. Wynne; but when the hour of reading was over the old lady preferred to be alone with her knitting, and when she did not make this plain to Olivia the incessant, monotonous click-click of the needles sounded to the girl like some wickedly unpunctual clock, and she was glad of any excuse to escape.

Her journey and sense of disenthrallment had for a brief time caused her to feel the utmost exultation; but now she keenly realized her isolation, and began to fear that she had made a mistake, and to take herself to task for having acted solely on selfish considerations. One hour with Octopia would have changed her mind; but time lessens our beliefs in the difficult, and she felt as though it might — nay, should — have been possible for her to stay at home. Then also her grandmother's feebleness at times alarmed her; and in fact she was too wearily weighted for one so young.

The moral and mental machinery may, like the muscular mechanism, become disordered from lack of chance to develop. When fate denies the sunshine to gracious seed of nature's sowing, some evil comes of it, — decay, distorted growths, too late a fruitage. There were these risks for Olivia.

Twice Olivia contrived to settle their hotel bill without going in person to face the ordeal of the cashier's desk and the staring men who lounged in the hideous hall. It was now their third week at the Cape, and again Mrs. Wynne desired Olivia to pay the bill, and at the same time to ask a number of questions.

Olivia hesitated; she had no training in the honest independence of the young American woman, and each novel excursion into the outside world of affairs cost her a certain amount of effort. Mr. Pennell had brought them to Cape May, and to Olivia it had been in anticipation quite other than what she found it, and now she must take the consequences, and, above all, save her grandmother from annoyances.

She remembered that in Europe her mother sent for a servant who took away the money due and brought back a receipt, so that there was no trouble about it. After having thrice rung the bell in her relative's room and had no response, that lady began to express herself as to what she called fuss. In fact, movement disturbed her; she loved the sedative of tranquillity.

"Olivia," she said, "you may ring all day if you please; no one comes. You will have to go down to the clerk's desk and get the receipt yourself, as other people do."

"But, grandmamma, if I go there to ask a question they keep me waiting, and — I don't mind being looked at, but I do mind being stared at; and there is a perfectly odious clerk, who wears rings."

"I do not see, my dear, how that affects the matter. You have brought me here, and we must do as other people do."

"But I should like you to see that young man, grandmamma," said Olivia, with a faint outbreak

of her too much repressed sense of the comical aspects of what she saw. "His hair is very pale, and it is parted in the middle. It is sad to see a man's hair so tremendously parted. I am sure it will never meet again."

"What nonsense you talk, child!"

"But, grandmamma, you really would have a new experience if you could see that man. He answers twenty questions a minute, and opens letters, and writes telegrams, and slams account-books about, and spins round on a high stool; and sticks his hair full of pens until he looks like a literary porcupine; and when he has a half-minute to himself he reads a brown-covered novel."

"You seem to have studied his habits with some care. Now suppose you were to go and pay him."

"Yes, grandmamma; and do you think there would be any impropriety in my asking him what that novel is? At the present rate it will be two years before he can finish it."

Mrs. Wynne smiled feebly. Her thoughts returned to herself, as is common with the aged, and she said, irrelevantly, —

"I was not allowed to read novels when I was young." Then she looked up. "Have you heard from Octopia yet?"

"Why, no, grandmamma. How should I?"

"Yes, that is true. I am losing my memory. What day is it?"

"Thursday."

"We have been here over three weeks. The noise confuses me; I forget everything, — even my meals, — except after I have eaten them," she added, with a touch of humor. "Now don't dawdle any longer, child; go and pay the bill."

Olivia went reluctantly along the bare, resounding corridor and down-stairs. It was the morning bathing-hour, and the vast, ugly hall was nearly deserted. She was agreeably surprised to find at the desk a new clerk. He was a simply-dressed young fellow, who did his multifarious duties with some apparent distrust of his capacity. In fact, he was learning a new and what he meant should be a temporary business.

He looked up and said, quietly, "What can I do for you?"

"Please to receipt this bill. Here is a check for the amount."

He went through the various forms, made the entries in his books, and at last concluded the little business. Then, as she stood a moment looking at the receipt and counting some change she had asked for, a young fellow in white flannel with a straw hat and a gay ribbon around it took her place, saying, with an air of surprise, —

"Why, Hollis, how came you here? We missed you from the class last year. What on earth became of you?"

"The money gave out. I shall go back to Yale this winter. I have done pretty well at this business."

"Good gracious! do you like it?"

"No, but I like the results. Very possibly I may study law and not go back to Yale. I am not sure."

"I don't think I should like your present occupation," said the young man.

The clerk looked at his vacant face, and replied, —

"No! my people do not quite fancy it; but I am getting some good lessons out of it. Suppose you were to join me?" And he smiled.

The man in flannel laughed loudly at the joke, and said he would see him again. Then, lighting a cigarette, he took a good look at Olivia and moved away.

It was a wholesome little experience to Olivia in American life, and the talk she had heard and the new clerk's quiet ways so reassured her that she ventured to return to the desk.

The clerk laid down the Italian grammar he had taken up, — for he too had his book, — and turned to her promptly. "Is not the change correct? I am not very ready at money-counting."

"Oh, yes, thank you," said Olivia. "I thought that perhaps you might be able to tell me of some more quiet place than the Cape and not too far away. I am here with my grandmother, and the noises distract her."

The young man paused a moment, as if reflecting. He thought first how sweet and yet how strong was the face before him.

"I think," he said, "you would find Cape May Court-house pleasant and quiet. It is an easy drive from here. I was there last week, and thought how agreeable it would be to escape to it for a while."

Then he began to reflect that he was getting out of the clerk business a little, and this he had meant resolutely to avoid. He added, in a formal tone, —

"I will write to-day and ask about rooms, if you wish. I will send up the reply. Miss Wynne, I believe?"

"Yes. My grandmother is Mrs. Wynne."

"I will send a note up to Mrs. Wynne when I hear."

"Thank you. I shall be very much obliged."

The clerk looked after her until she went out of view at a turn of the broad staircase; but at times for many a day he was haunted by a more and more dreamy memory of the face which lit up at the small and quite official offer of service he had made, and which seemed so sensitively ready to anticipate words with expression.

He bethought himself, as he took up his book again, how life was like a great road, where the wheel-ruts cross and recross or meet and never again come together. Then he made a mistake in a bill, and was rather roughly called back to the world of figures by the debtor's unpleasantness.

However, he was as good as his word, got a re-

ply about the rooms, and learned for them all that they wished to know, being a gentleman in the disguise of a hotel clerk; then he saw Mrs. Wynne and Miss Wynne drive away in the Jersey wagon, went back to his desk, and knew them no more.

The old lady consented to move, but introduced much needless friction into the movement. Happily, the road proved to be easy for every one except the horses; and perhaps she felt it as a reasonable courtesy on the part of the mosquitoes that they seemed to prefer the more youthful prey. The way ran inland, and at last, as we have said, brought them to the little inn, which stood modestly back from the road under shelter of the leafy cascades of two great weeping willows.

Circumstances further favored Miss Wynne. The inn was quiet, — its few summer guests had fled; the rooms, if small, were of absolute cleanliness, and the cooking was of that simple perfection which was formerly to be found on the coast of New Jersey.

At last Mrs. Wynne was comfortable and contented. Her needles clicked steadily, and she began to improve in health, and, as her irritability born of discomfort lessened, to take more and more pleasure in the efflorescence of happy, vigorous life which came almost of a sudden to Olivia.

The little hamlet was at that day untroubled by many visitors, and quite off from the great high-

ways of the moving, uneasy summer world. The day after their arrival Olivia ventured out to examine it, with a queer yet delightful sensation of being an explorer in an unknown land. When she came back in a couple of hours, flushed and joyous, the old lady put on her glasses and inspected her curiously and not without reasonable satisfaction. Then she laid down her needles, and said, —

"Where have you been, my dear? Tell me all about it. I feel better to-day."

"That was all I wanted to make me perfectly happy."

"Is it much of a town?" inquired the old lady, in placid pursuit of information.

"Grandmamma, it is one street. The houses are weather-worn and gray, like the men. I have been into the pine woods; I have been up the street to the judge's house and down town to the wheelwright's; I have seen the court-house; I have bought some tape, and two spools of thread, and a pound of ginger snaps, — all there was; I have seen a tire put on a wheel, and a horse shod; and I have been in the kitchen to see Mrs. Ludlam make cup-cake, and" —

"Bless me, child!"

"Oh, that was n't all. If you speak to any one, they are called Ludlam, or Leaming, or Hand. It 's so convenient! Nobody is called anything else. And, last and best of all, grandmamma, I have made an acquaintance."

"My dear, you should be a little careful as to that."

Olivia set her arms akimbo. "Now I am the blacksmith, — he is Joe Hand; Tom Holmes helps him. I asked him how one could get over to the beaches. He took a good look at me, and then he dropped a horse's foot he had in his leather lap, as if it was of no kind of importance. It was really a compliment, grandmamma, to see how he neglected that horse for me. Then he said, 'Uncle John, this here young woman wants to get over to the beaches.'

"Grandmamma, now I know Uncle John Leslie. He does n't answer to the name of Hand or Ludlam, because he comes from Long-a-coming. He knocked his head against the door-lintel when he came in to speak to me; I think he must be six foot four; 'and they do say, maarm, as he ken heft a buoy weight,' and why every one calls him 'Uncle John' I do not know; it is a mystery, madam. And now I have done." And with this she pirouetted and dropped a courtesy which spread her skirts in a voluminous circle about her. "I have n't made a cheese for four years, grandmamma, and I feel ridiculously happy."

"Upon my word, I think you must be out of your head, child."

"No; happy, — only happy. Uncle John is the captain of the life-station on Five Mile Beach. He says he will show it to me if you will let me go over in the boat with him."

"And how old, Olive, is this universal uncle?"

"About sixty, I should guess."

"Well, we shall see. I suppose there is no hurry?"

"No," said Olive, disappointed nevertheless; "I can wait."

She had been waiting so long for all girlish pleasures that to abandon for a time any scheme of enjoyment had come to be only too easy.

Mrs. Wynne had arranged that she was to have her meals brought up to her room; but Olivia had pleaded that, as there were no other guests, she herself might be allowed to eat in the little dining-room down-stairs.

She spent the first day in walking and sketching. The two rows of weather-worn wooden houses were divided by a road, where the dogs took delight in dusty scampers, and bare-legged children dug in the sand until some passing wagon scattered them and disturbed the laborious black tumble-bugs. She wandered on at last until she came to the meadows beyond the town. Low dikes kept out the tides, and within them, to landward, countless ditches crossed and recrossed.

Olive followed a well-worn path along one of the embankments until it ended in a narrow plank sustained by piles driven into the oozy soil beneath. Every moment she paused, attracted by some strange product of the marsh. It was all amazingly new to her. There was the matchless green of spatterdocks, and the floating arrow-head

leaves already purpled. Her first acquaintance with the grace of the tall cat-tails she never forgot. The plumy golden-rods were thick on the dikes, with asters and centaury, while around every brown pool the salt-wort or samphire began to wear its autumn lake-tints, to be yet more glorious before October had gone.

Now pausing, now lightly flitting over the springy planks, she came at last to the main dike, where, being raised above the marsh, she commanded a wider view. At her feet was a broad salt creek, and beyond it low marsh-lands, — to the view merely a level prairie flashing with the glitter of sharp, stiff grasses. Two miles away a line of pure white sand-dunes marked the summit of the ocean beach, and all between her and these were myriad creeks, water-ways, "vents," broader thoroughfares, and to left and right narrow inlets through which the pent-up waters swept fiercely with the ebb and flood. Now and then a distant sail moved mysteriously through the grass. At Olivia's feet the muddy banks were populous with strange creatures, — scuttling crabs, queer worms, and lazy turtles.

The salt air came over the water with hum of insect life and call of birds. No one was in sight. She seemed to own it all in unquestioned right. Tranquilly happy, she stood upon the shore and felt the rare joy of being in some true and pleasant relation to this gracious world of sun and air and marsh and water.

A bit of squared ship-timber lay on the bank. She sat down and began to sketch the dead hull of a wrecked schooner which some mighty tide had drifted in and left upon the farther shore, — a bit of mast, half a deck, and for the rest gaunt ribs black and now tide-marked with barnacles and sea-weed. Two or three worn blocks hung over the rail like ancient skulls.

Finding the horizon too remote and ample, she went down the bank and pulled at the rope which held a large flat bateau fastened to a stake on the margin. Somewhat timidly, she got in, and sat down with her back to the land and continued her sketch. Once, looking round, she saw that the boat had drifted out to the length of the rope, but, being satisfied that it was securely held, she turned to her task again.

An hour passed away, and the sun getting warmer, she made up her mind to go home, but on turning perceived to her discomfiture that the tide had fallen and that the boat was stranded a half-dozen feet from the bank, between which and herself was a shining bed of mud, full of the round holes of the squirting clam.

She was a half-mile from the village, and no one was in sight. It was rather funny, she thought; but then how long would it last? The tide had to go down and then come up. How long were tides about this business? She was sure she had learned all about them once, but never having dreamed that a practical application

of the knowledge might become valuable, she had forgotten all about them. She was sure the tide was going out, because a crab which seemed to have lost his claws in battle with his peers was hopelessly stranded beyond her boat.

Decision is easy when only one course is possible; and accordingly, after an enterprising pull at the rope, she sat down again in the stern with a laugh, remarking aloud, "Now, what *can* I do?"

At this moment the bow of a skiff parted the reeds on the further shore, where a small creek ran into the thoroughfare. As the little boat sped out on to the broader stream, a man who had been standing in the stern and sculling with noiseless ease turned suddenly to see where he was going. To his surprise he was aware of a young woman seated in the stern of a stranded boat, not thirty yards distant. A broad straw hat concealed face and neck, but the lines of her form were youthful and gracious. A faint smile lit up his face as Blake, still standing, began to paddle his skiff across the water. The sound caught Olive's ear, and turning, she saw a face which had at once become grave; a strong, squarely built figure in a much used army undress jacket, the head above it bare, the hair short, the complexion darkly sunburned; a visage resolute and grave, plainly not of the coast people.

"Now he will laugh at me," thought Olive.

"Are you not stranded?" he said, quietly.

"Yes. I was sketching and forgot all about the tide. How can I get on shore?"

"I will help you in a moment," he said, as he came beside her. "I myself forgot that the tide was on the ebb, and I am so used to the sea that I should have remembered it. One moment," he added; "and pray sit down," for she had risen, "it will be all right in a moment." As he spoke he urged his skiff well up on to the oozy shore, drove an oar deep into the mud, and with the boat-rope in his hand leaped lightly ashore.

"Don't move," he said, "and hold fast to the gunwales,— the sides, I mean,— while I pull your ark to land." Securing his own lighter skiff he took hold of the rope by which Olivia's heavy bateau was made fast to the shore, and with great difficulty drew it within four or five feet of the firmer bank. Without a word he again and again put forth his utmost strength, but with only the most trivial result. The task seemed to occupy him to the exclusion of all else.

Meanwhile Olivia was becoming embarrassed.

"I beg," she said, "that you will not trouble yourself further. It really is not worth while. I can wait."

"Hardly. I shall manage it somehow," said Blake, who stood contemplating the situation with that inborn dislike to being defeated which belongs to the temperament of men destined to success in life. Miss Wynne began to be amused, and to wonder which would win — tenacious mud or tenacious man.

"Do not you think I could jump, or might not you find a stone?"

"The bank is too slippery for a jump, and as to stones large enough, there is not one from here to Key West."

"Then I must possess my soul in patience."

Blake glanced at the changeful face, the modest eyes, a certain stateliness in the carriage of the head, and concluded swiftly that the soul might be a pleasant possession.

"There is one way," he said. "If Uncle John were here he would calmly carry you ashore."

"But he is not." She colored slightly, and they both laughed.

"Pardon me," he added. "We have a way on our coast," and he moved half way towards the bow of her boat, sinking, as he did so, knee deep in the slimy mud.

"Oh, please, don't," she cried.

"This way, please." She rose and came to the bow at once.

"Now," he said, "I shall stand on one foot, and lift the other — so, and you will set one foot on mine, and jump, but you must be quick and not afraid, or we shall both get a tumble."

Olive, in turn, glanced once at the hardy, reassuring face, gave him one hand, set a foot on his as he lifted it, and leaped lightly upon the bank. Blake kept his station with a vigorous effort after this rather difficult feat, turned to the boat, gathered up her sketching-material, and quietly

waded ashore. As he gave them to the owner he noted the name, "Olivia Wynne," on the back of a drawing-block, and felt that fortune had done him a good turn.

"I hardly know how to thank you," said the girl, looking with dismay at Blake's condition.

"It is not of the slightest moment," he returned, lifting his straw hat, as with another word or two of embarrassed thanks Miss Wynne bade him good-morning and walked away along the raised planking above the wet meadow. For years she had seen but rarely young men of her own class, and the incident left her with a slight sense of romance and a pretty vivid remembrance of the masterful face and vigorous manliness of the person who had aided her. She was not sure that if she told her grandmother the result might not be an unpleasant limitation of her newly acquired liberty.

On her return to the hotel she heard the landlady speak of Major Blake. The name startled her. Could this by any chance be the hero of her cousin's story? Then she saw on a gun-case in the hall the full name, "Roland Blake."

After breakfast next morning she found it amusing to relate to the old lady her second interview, which she did in her rather quaint fashion.

"I had a young man for breakfast, grandmamma."

"To eat, my dear? You make use of very odd expressions."

Olive laughed. She thought the cannibalism might have been better assigned to the gray eyes of the young man in question.

"Oh, I know all about him now. He is one of our officers. His name is Blake, — Roland Blake. It is a very nice name, I think. He comes from Portsmouth."

"Indeed! Roland Blake? He must be a grandson of Roland Blake. My dear, I danced with his grandfather at the ball which was given to Lafayette. I think I should like to see him, Olive. His father was a handsome man as I remember him. Is the son handsome? Is he tall?"

"No, he is not tall. If you desire it, grandmamma, I will take a good look at him, and if I am in doubt I will ask him if he is generally considered handsome."

The old lady liked to be amused, and began to find in Olivia a new source of quiet pleasure, as she related her little collections of gossip and observation. At home the natural playfulness of her fancy had been repressed by hostile circumstance or had lacked opportunity and food. Now she felt at times the need to restrain herself as to both speech and action. She had found friends and comrades at home in books, but here she was seized with a sudden disgust for printed pages, and turned with wholesome capacity for fresher enjoyment to the simple and interesting people about her, and to the joy of earth and wood

and sea and marsh. These latter at least were as remembered friends, to whom she came back eagerly; but as to the variety in men and women she knew very little. There were some dim recollections of people seen abroad who took small notice of a growing girl. Then there was her life in New York, where her education had been carried on by masters. In her classes she knew a few girls, and at first had been allowed to see some youthful society; but, as time went by, at home, the constancy of the claim upon her had by degrees broken off all such alliances, and she had fallen into a life which included little except her relatives, her books, and her lessons, and occasional exchange of visits with the few people she still knew in New York.

Under these circumstances the formal training she got from Mrs. Wynne was valuable when she began to inhale the exhilarating breath of freedom. The old lady thought proper now to say a word of warning: —

"Remember, Olive, that situated as I am, you are left almost alone to yourself. When I was young, all this liberty allowed to girls was well enough; but I have my doubts whether it is wise nowadays. Men are more wicked than they used to be: that I am sure of."

"Indeed, grandmamma! were they never wicked when you were young?" said Olivia, with an appearance of demure simplicity. "I think I have heard you say horrible things about grandfather's friend Colonel Burr."

"My dear, he was so charming a gentleman that one quite forgot how naughty he was."

"I don't think the young man down-stairs is wicked. At all events, I shall never know unless I ask him." And then she described the delight there would be in this simplifying of social life by a direct inquiry as to wealth, health, general character, and belongings.

Mrs. Wynne had the dislike of elderly people to being puzzled by the mental attitudes of younger folks. She felt it vaguely as an intangible form of disrespect; and at times the girl in her sudden evolution was bewildering to the older lady, who in their stagnant life had found no occasion to make much practical study of her grandchild's character.

She reflected a moment. "I think, dear," she said, "if Mr. Blake is one of the Portsmouth Blakes I should like to see him. He may be going away; but if you should happen to see him again you might say that I should be glad if he could find time to call on me."

"But I meant to tell you that he told me he would send up this morning to ask if you would allow him the honor of seeing you."

"Was that what he said, my dear? You make so much fun of everything lately that I am never quite able to say when you are stating a fact and when you are not."

"Oh, that was really what he said. He has almost as beautiful manners as you have, grandmamma."

"I suppose, child, he thinks, very properly, that as he has to take his meals with you it is well that he should know me."

"That must be it," said Olivia, with some inward sense of amusement.

"Well, tell me a little about him. If he is really a nice person I am glad you should know him. In fact, Olive, it is hardly my fault that we have known so few people. Octopia" —

"Please don't mention her, grandmamma: I am trying to forget her. Some day she will be down on us again, with pillows and hot-water bags and shawls and scent bottles, and then my freedom is at an end."

"Well, child, perhaps now that" —

"Please don't, grandmamma. Let me tell you about Mr. Blake: it is so much more interesting. When I went down to breakfast he was walking up and down under the willows, bareheaded: he will be awfully freckled, poor thing! — so I went in to breakfast. There were two plates and napkin-rings, and breakfast for ten people, — fish, and clam fritters, and oysters, and 'cranberry sass,' and split chickens that looked exactly like the Austrian double eagles, and honey, and an archipelago of little dishes. By and by he came in, — Mr. Blake, I mean, — and said, 'Good-morning,' — which really was not very original, — and then put a book at his side and began to eat and now and then to read. He ate a good deal, too."

"Well, and what did he say, child?"

"You could n't guess in a week."

"I suppose not."

"Well, after a while, between two griddle-cakes he looked up from his book in a dreamy sort of way, and, just as if I had been reading it too, he said, 'Did you ever notice how some people stumble over themselves?'

"I said, 'Yes, it was very common.'

"You know I had n't the least idea what he meant; but he had been so silent I wanted to help the conversation.

"Then he went on to add that he was glad I understood, because he was not sure his thought had been clear even to himself, but that, after all, perplexity was the father of discovery; upon which I conversationally collapsed and asked him what was its grandmother.

"We both laughed at that, and then we had a really pleasant talk, because he was reading Ruskin, you know, — the first volume."

"No, I do not; but that does n't matter."

"Oh! I forgot two things. Mr. — I mean Uncle John — is coming to see you. There will be quite a levee. I thought that perhaps if you knew him you would let me go over to the beaches with him; and I must see the beaches."

"And what else?"

"There is a letter from Mr. Pennell. Shall I read it to you?"

"Yes, dear."

"Addenda! How did he get that name? I

wish Octopia would marry him: I should love to call her Mrs. Addenda Pennell."

"Do go on, child. I never heard your tongue run at such a rate."

"Well, Addenda says: —

"DEAR MISS WYNNE, — I inclose draft on the Cape May Bank as desired. Please acknowledge. Miss Darnell is looking better, but is, quite naturally, I think, irritated at your desire to get away from her. You will permit me to say, as an old friend, that the more I think it over the less does it seem to me quite right. I should be a great deal more comfortable if you would allow me to tell her where you are. I rather hastily agreed to keep her in ignorance, and have kept my word; but it will of course be as difficult as it would be unkind to continue to do so. She has been a good friend to you and yours; and while I can see that the irritability caused by her long ill health may have been too much for you to bear and may have made temporary absence desirable, I cannot think that your way of getting it was wise or quite kind.

"Pray forgive my freedom of speech, and think it over afresh, and perhaps after a talk with your grandmother you may agree with me. I may illustrate the absurdity of the situation by telling you that a Mr. Blake — one of the well-known Portsmouth family — came here to ask where he could find your grandmother. As I always keep my word, I was put in the ridiculous position of having to say I knew, but could not tell him. I

think he discovered soon, after all, about your present residence. You can now see how odd the whole affair must seem to a stranger.

"Miss Darnell desires her love to you and to Mrs. Wynne, and begs me to add that, while she misses greatly your gentle care, she is too self-respectful to make any further effort to find you. Mr. Darnell is still with her.

"Yrs., with esteem and respect,

"A. PENNELL."

"It is exactly as I told you it would be, Olive," said Mrs. Wynne. "Of course Octopia feels hurt about Richard."

"And how can I help that? I may be sorry for her" (she did not say she was), "but I cannot help her."

"Well, I never could quite understand why you disliked him so much."

"But I only did not like him. I did not dislike him."

"Well, it amounted to the same thing," said Mrs. Wynne, with the persistency of decrepit logic. "And now we have made an enemy of your cousin. As to her being really in earnest in her threats and her willfulness, I don't believe it. Octopia is not a bad woman, Olivia, but when a woman suffers as she does, the pain seems to tie her fast to herself, so that the rights of well people seem very unimportant. Pain does make people selfish, my dear."

The speech was long and the reflections unu-

sual to Olive's experience of her old relative; but they did not shake the younger woman's opinions. Octopia was of course more or less an enigma to one so inexperienced and who could not guess how immensely her cousin was influenced in her recent conduct by overwhelming affection for her brother. Nor did the girl value herself enough as yet to appreciate the passion which her attractiveness aroused in a man like Darnell. She was utterly free from that vanity which society so readily cultivates in the genial soil of feminine natures. We may be permitted to doubt if Eve was born vain.

Olivia had often found it safe to advocate delay, since for Mrs. Wynne it was always easier to provide for to-morrow's wants than for to-day's demands, and she thought of next week as the least importunate of creditors.

"On the whole, Olive, I think we might wait a little," she said; "and, as Mr. Pennell has promised a visit, you might ask him to come soon and then we could talk it all over."

Meanwhile, Olivia's mind was much more immediately intent on the few words about Blake, which enormously excited her curiosity and of which she expected her grandmother to speak next. Before, however, that matter could be in turn discussed, a knock was heard at the door, and there entered a rather weather-worn maid, who usually while she waited on table hummed a Methodist hymn-tune to a castanet accompaniment of clattering plates and dishes.

"The young man down-stairs that came yesterday — his name I disremember," — a word which ought to be in better society, — "might he come up and see you, ma'am?"

Before the two ladies had leisure further to consider what his errand might be, Roland Blake entered. Mrs. Wynne had but time to secure her carved Chinese fan and to ruffle her gloves down at the wrists.

As she stood in the rather dim little white-paneled room, before the fireplace filled with hazy tops of asparagus stems gay with red berries, she looked, despite her slight figure, a lady of the larger world. What with the lace and the gray hair falling straight below it on the forehead, the thin gray side curls, the bare arms and white gloves, she seemed to Blake to resemble the fairy godmother of a French tale. He said afterwards that he fell in love with her when she made him a courtesy.

"I ventured to ask if I might call to see you, madam, because it occurred to me that as we are both of Portsmouth birth I should not be looked upon as an entire stranger."

"If you are Roland Blake's grandson I am more than glad to see you. Your mother was a Sherbourne, I think. If you are not a brave soldier and a good man you are no Blake."

Roland smiled. He liked the pretty little flattery of these old-fashioned forms of compliment.

"Thank you, Madam Wynne, for all the

Blakes," he returned, smiling. "My mother was Ann Sherbourne."

"You call me Madam Wynne. Once every one called me Madam Wynne. I shall begin to think you very aged, sir." It was pleasant to see the old lady's fine manner as she talked.

"You are not forgotten in Portsmouth yet," he said. "People still talk about Madam Wynne; but until within a few days I was stupid enough not to identify you with my old home."

She had stood but a moment. "Sit down," she said, — "a little nearer, please. I want to see if you are like your mother." And she looked at him steadily, to Olivia's amusement. "No; you favor the Blakes; but you are not as handsome as your grandfather was."

"But I have the advantage of being alive and of seeing you to-day, which is only a just compensation," he returned.

Olivia thought he talked like a gentleman of her grandmother's time, — which was true for the moment. He was himself unconscious of possessing that rare form of courtliness which makes every woman the queen of the moment.

"I see," said Mrs. Wynne, toying with her ivory fan, "that you have inherited some of the ways of those dangerous ancestors of yours. I am so old that I can say I like you, Roland Blake. Now I am tired. Come and see me again."

Roland rose, bowed, said a word or two of offered service, and left the room.

"Why, grandmamma, you did not say a word about why Mr. Blake wished to see you; and I am dying of curiosity."

"My dear Olive, I forgot it. However, it can wait. I will ask him to-morrow. I like the young man; he has good manners. All those Blakes were nice people. And now you had better write to Mr. Pennell; you need not mention Octopia; and then, dear, I should like a little reading."

Before Olivia had written a line they were interrupted by a second knock. "Uncle John Leslie, — might he come in?" Mrs. Wynne thought he might, if he did not stay long.

Despite much experience, Uncle John knocked his head against the door-lintel, — which never ceased to astonish him. He seemed to fill the room, — a great man with close-cropped gray hair and a nose like a headland.

The old lady said, "How do you do, Mr. Leslie?" and for a moment her hand was lost in the huge brown freckled paw which frankly sought her grasp.

"I guessed, marm," said he, "as the young lady was wantin' to go round with me a bit, you might like to see me; not as I'm much to see 'ceptin' for bigness." And he laughed.

The old lady looked him over coolly. She was getting to be very much more alive than she had been.

"I think I may trust you," she said.

"Jus' you leave her to me, marm. There shan't no mawsel of harm come to her."

"And what are your terms, Mr. Leslie? of course I cannot expect you to give us your time for nothing."

Uncle John smiled all over his hairy brown face. "Guess I 'll take it out in eddication, marm. She did tell me she knowed French."

Mrs. Wynne did not like jokes from her inferiors. "I do not understand you," she said.

Olivia, who was quick and tactful, interposed, "Uncle John and I will arrange all that on the 'mashes.' Isn't that good Jersey, Uncle John?" The captain hospitably distributed another ample laugh to his entire economy; Mrs. Wynne said, "Very well: arrange it, dear, as you please;" and then at last the letter was written.

A few days later Roland Blake wrote to Francis: —

My dear Phil, — I begin to think the world a very amusing place, despite your melancholic calumnies. There is no need to squint it into duplicity. I greatly regret that you are not to join me sooner. There is some fishing, — poor fun at best after a man has once handled a salmon. As to shooting, you can get a few beach-birds, if you want them. For my part, I am given over to a love-affair with my Lady Nature, who smiles at me from the skies and blushes for me in the sunsets, and bedecks herself with autumn primroses and golden-rods, and yesterday scolded in an east wind. How fair and peaceful it is, and how far

away from the horrors of that dreadful "Angle" at Spottsylvania! I shudder, remembering it, to think how close to the devil our highest duties bring us. Every angel seems to me to have a twin fiend. How glad I am to be done with the war business I can hardly say, nor how sadly I think of the poor fellows who fought us so well.

There is no one here except, by strange chance, an old lady named Wynne, who comes from Portsmouth, and who is the same person you came upon in your little adventure in New York. Her granddaughter is with her, a tall girl, rather quaintly formal at times and at others queerly frank. She is a rather interesting and perplexing combination of child and woman; yet she must be, I should guess, at least nineteen. She knows more of books than of people, but is so intelligent that I can hardly describe her as an *ingénue*. I fancy she must have lived a good deal out of the world, and yet in cities. It is quite delightful to see how she absorbs the loveliness of nature about us, as if it were an interesting book and old Time were standing by like a lover to turn the pages. It is a drawback that she is related to that fellow Darnell. However, I forget always that I talk and must talk enigmatically when I speak of him to you, and indeed to any one. Should he by any chance turn up here, it will be — well, very unpleasant; but when you come I will try to talk to you a little more freely. Why not bring Miss Francis down with you? Yours, R. B.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"The punishment of another life may be to know too much."

"Truth could not speak to me with truer tongue.
When love doth lay his hand on age's heart,
The music that it beats is more eternal
Than all the feverish trumpetings of youth
That would out-protest nature."

WHILE Roland Blake was studying nature in more fashions than he was well aware of, Octopia had reached a comparatively tranquil state of mind. She was not capable of prolonged anger, and what temptation the savagery of this passion brought her was brief. Moreover, her brother was becoming again, as he had often been before, a source of grave anxiety. The war being over, he was enabled to go about as freely as he pleased, and this unchecked liberty had been serious enough in its consequences.

He threw himself on a lounge one evening in his sister's room, and said, "Octy, I am out of money."

"Out of money!" she said. "Why, Dick, I gave you a hundred dollars last week. And you said that you were about to receive the money you left in Virginia."

"And what then, Octy?"

"How did you get two thousand dollars, Dick? I forgot to ask you."

He hesitated, as he always did about lying: it was curiously disagreeable to him, — perhaps because he connected it with ideas of cowardice.

"Well, I won it at play."

She was too shrewd to believe this. "For shame, Dick!" she said. "Nonsense!"

He had to say something, and he was of course unable to tell her the hideous truth.

"Well, why not, Octy?"

"Money was not so plenty in our poor Virginia."

"Then, if you must know, it was money which was to have paid for my journey to England."

"But I thought that had been given up. You said so."

"Only postponed; and I had not turned in the cash again: my capture, you see, prevented it."

"But you surely did not spend that money?"

"Yes. I succeeded in getting it sent to me: one of my friends had it in his care when I went to the army; and, if you must know, I spent it — lost it — in the Gold Room."

"Oh, Dick!"

"Really, Octy, you are wonderful! Do you suppose I meant to turn it over to Uncle Sam?"

The ethical situation perplexed her, as he had meant it should.

"I wish you had not done it."

"Better luck next time."

"And what now? What do you mean to do? I have still about five thousand dollars. My small

reserve of money in bank has almost gone. It is slipping through my fingers and slipping out of yours as fast as you get it."

"Yes, I have had bad fortune."

"And worse management. If you were even reasonably prudent I feel sure that you could marry Olivia. You are fast making it impossible."

"I did my best. I really do care for that girl; but no man can force a woman to marry him, and, after all, you promised a great deal and did very little. If you have any real influence over that fool of an old woman, you might have used it. I don't believe it amounts to anything after all."

"You are mistaken."

"Then use it. We know now where they are, and it must be clear enough to you that we can't live on air."

"I am willing enough to try again; but I must feel a little more certain of how we stand."

She believed at present that she had never meant to use the secret she possessed further than to secure her a home and indulgence in her craving for power and devotion, and at least the easily believed show of affection desired by such invalids as she.

When her too eager greed for sway and sympathy began to fail of response, she had found it needful, in her quite gentle deprecatory way, to remind Mrs. Wynne and at last Olivia of their debt to her. Then came the fiercer temptation

to assist her brother's love-affair, and she began to substitute threats for mere hints, always reserving to herself the power to withdraw, and never truly resolute to use implacably the weapon she carried. She had been selling her soul in fractions, but was irresolute as to completing the transaction.

At last she said, "And what is it you want, Dick?"

"I want that woman, because I love her; that is what I want. I want money for you and for me, and I must have it. Mrs. Wynne has far more than she can need; you and I have nothing. It appears to me, Octy, that the problem is of the utmost simplicity. If I had ten or fifteen thousand dollars I could use it so as to make us both rich. Now is the time."

The cynical coolness of his statement appalled his sister. Until of late she had clung to the belief that although wild, reckless, and masterful he was free from the baser vices. She shuddered as she realized what she had done to tempt him.

"And how do you propose, Dick, to get ten thousand dollars? Gratitude goes for little when one comes to ask for its equivalent in coin. If you or I were to say to Mrs. Wynne, 'Lend us ten thousand dollars,' — I don't say 'give it,' I never will do that; but 'lend it,' — she would laugh in your face."

"Not if I knew what you say you know. By

George! I have half a mind to try what the mere threat will do."

"Dick," she said, starting up, "you can't mean it!"

"Why not? I am at my wits' end. I must live. I can't work. If you never desired it, why the deuce did you suggest it? The fact is, you would like to do it and are afraid."

She looked at him steadily. He was flushed. Had he been drinking? It accounted to her in some degree for his unusual bluntness. A new agony was on her.

"Dick, Dick," she said, and choked, so that she ceased to speak and merely held him by the sleeve, — "you could not, Dick! — you cannot! I have been wrong, — wicked! Don't say I tempted you; that is too dreadful. And — and — what I do does n't matter; but you, — a Darnell, a gentleman! Dick, tell me you won't. I will do anything for you. Only say you did not mean it."

The crime she herself had contemplated in his interest and her own became to her monstrous when he himself proposed to enact it. Her charity had always covered his sins, but now at last it was no longer possible. Shuddering she turned from the naked crime she could no longer hide with excuses.

He certainly understood her but too well. It emphasized his own irregular knowledge of his degradation that she should so clearly see it. Nor was it his wish to alarm her. In her excitements

she was heroically capable, — a woman of extremes. He had known her to go to strange lengths. He rarely drank, but to-day her suspicion was correct. It had made him rough and careless.

He tried the old plan of affectionate demonstration. She would none of it. "I must know," she said, "I must know clearly what you mean to do. I will not help you."

"Then," said he, coldly, "the sooner we part the better. I may as well speak out, I suppose. I have spent my money, and I owe a lot in Wall Street. Half of what you have will not pay it, and the Yankee sharpers may whistle for it, as far as I am concerned. As to the Wynnes, they have treated you disgracefully, and I do not see why you need be so careful of their feelings. I at least do not mean to be."

She sat up, a stern look on her Italian face.

"You mean to threaten Mrs. Wynne in order to get this money?"

"I have some such idea."

"Then I will not let you do this sin. If I have been wicked, I cannot bear that you should be. Oh, that — that is my cruellest punishment."

"And how do you propose, my most suddenly virtuous sister, to stop me?"

"How? how?" she cried, wildly, starting up to her full height, the warning sibyl not more grand. "I — I have lied to you. It is not true. There is nothing in it. I merely made believe I

had power over them. I — I thought — oh, can't you see what stuff it was? How could I know anything? ' Why, you were silly, Dick!" And she laughed hysterically.

"Pshaw, Octy! do you suppose me to be an idiot? You were a little too mysterious about old Arthur Wynne when you were here with him: I suspected something then; now I know."

"What do you know? You know nothing. I will say it is a lie. I lied. I tell you I lied. I will say so to everybody."

"My dear sister, you have been educating Mrs. Wynne too long for any such nonsense. There was something wrong with Arthur Wynne and his affairs, of that I am sure enough; and it will be all I need to know. Would n't it be better if we made common cause? But if you will not aid me I shall act alone. Now, why not tell me sensibly all that you know, like a good girl?"

"My God!" she exclaimed; "like a good girl!"

"Oh, damn it, then, like a bad one."

Octopia looked pitifully down at the manly figure, the flushed face, the rather delicate nose she had always said was so high-bred, the too eager, restless eyes. It was a moment of surpassing agony, on which be sure some pitying angel gazed sadly.

"Brother, you have broken my heart. Tell me you will not do this thing. Take all I have, — take everything; I shall not care. If I had a million I would give it to you."

"Oh, Octy, what on earth is the use of making a fuss over it? Suppose we just drop it for to-day?"

She had begun to know him, alas! too well.

"No," she said; "I must know."

"Well, I promise you I will do nothing for a week or two. Could you let me have a little money?"

"Anything," she said, drearily, and went slowly to her room.

Presently she came back and put her check-book on the table. Standing beside it, she said, "Please to fill in the check. I can't write: my hand shakes."

It would be hard to say why this troubled him, but it did. He sat down. "I don't want much," he said.

"Fill it for a hundred dollars, Dick." He did so. She took the seat he vacated, and writing slowly, signed the check, scrupulously used the blotter, and made entry of the amount drawn, finding some assistance in this mechanical repetition of the ordinary little routine.

"Thank you, Octy," he said, kissing her.

"You are welcome, I suppose," she replied, and could not help adding, "I have thirty-five dollars left for expenses."

"But you told me you had five thousand dollars."

"I have still four thousand in Mr. Pennell's hands. He pays me interest. I have drawn in

two weeks nearly five hundred. You best know, Dick, where it has gone. I don't grudge it; I am only explaining."

In fact, she was by temperament prodigal, and did not value money. She was sinking in a hopeless quagmire of self-abasement and despair, so that gold had for her no more physical value than it has for the wretch alone in mid-Atlantic surges.

"I did n't want to take so much," he said, "I shall return it some day, and pretty soon, too."

Darnell felt the petty meanness of his recent calls on her slender resources, being more open to small remorses than to great ones. He had the unthinking physical courage of a panther, with some educated disinclination to oppress the weak or to take small dishonorable advantages at play or in the formal duels in which he had been more than once engaged. He was, of course, undergoing slow molecular moral disintegration, but as yet he found greater temptings in large wickedness than in small baseness. There are men who will murder, but will not lie, who may be guilty of astounding betrayals, but would not rob a till. In crime the greater does not always involve the less, and the amount of temptation scarcely answers to explain the idiosyncrasies of criminal natures.

When he said he was sorry and would soon return the money, he meant it for the minute; for what hope is like the gambler's, which finds food in failure?

"Well, never mind," she returned, in the same dull monotone she had used throughout the last sad minutes of their talk. "It does n't matter. My money is your money. As it always was, so it always will be."

"I will not ask you for another cent, Octy."

"I told you, Dick, that I did not care about that. It is your threat that troubles me."

"I don't mean it to disturb you. After all, it was only a wild scheme of mine to make these people put their gratitude in a tangible form. We won't talk about it any more."

"Very well," she said; but she observed that he had not said he would not go on with the wickedness to which she had in a measure lured him. He kissed her again, and went out, leaving her physically exhausted.

She sat where he left her, thinking fruitlessly of her innocent girlhood, and tried to go forward from those happier days and explain to herself how she had fallen as she had done. But honest self-analysis is always too pitiless a task to be easy for women of her sensitive temperament. If only she could have thrown herself on some good woman's breast and sobbed out her confession of regrets, remorses, and sorrowful disappointments, it would have been what she needed. There was no one she could seek, and her religion had been but a form, and was commonly put away like a marker between the leaves of her prayer-book.

Why confession to another should be comfort-

ing is as yet one of the unanswered questions of the human heart. The mere telling of a thing, be it large or little, is pleasurable to the mass of mankind. The instinct which makes us chatter forth our useless comments on the trifles of the day bids speak the poet and the preacher. History counts as few the heroes who could hold their tongues, and even crime distests the loneliness of silence.

Octopia did not believe that her brother's calls upon her would cease, as he had promised. The knowledge that there was money within his reach had always been too much for Darnell to resist in his better days; and now, no consideration was likely to stand long in his way. A fortnight passed by, however, before he again drew upon her slender purse, when he explained that he had had a little good luck, — for which, as he had been tranquil in the mean while, his sister felt sadly thankful, — but that now he really must ask her for a thousand dollars.

At first she declared that it was out of the question. He then told her that he now knew Mrs. Wynne to be near or at Cape May, because, having called on Mr. Pennell a few days before, he had been told by an unwarned and incautious clerk that he had gone to Cape May to see Mrs. Wynne.

Octopia had little doubt that he was correct in his guess, and was soon made to feel that what he said to her was a hint that he meant to see Mrs.

Wynne in case of need. She said he should have the money; and in answer to a note Mr. Pennell appeared that evening in her drawing-room. He had seen her once or twice since his last visit, to arrange some matters in regard to Mrs. Wynne's furniture, and nothing more had passed between them as to the affairs discussed when last they met.

She came down presently. "You are very kind to be so prompt," she said. "I am used now to unkindness, and I really feel the friendliness of an immediate call from so busy a man."

Her soft voice and a certain graciousness of manner put him at his ease; but his last rebuff had left him shy and doubtful.

"Oh, I am not so very busy. I do hope you feel that you may count on my being always at your service."

"Not always," she said, smiling; "but now that I know where Mrs. Wynne is, I shall quite forgive you." She could not resist this little show of power.

He answered promptly, "I am glad you do know. I considered the whole thing very — well, very inconsiderate, and perhaps I might even say foolish; but, after all, you must see that I had no resource except to say I would not tell. I owe a great deal to the Wynne family. I could not do otherwise than I did. I should have told you in a few days, however."

"Mrs. Wynne may rest easy. I shall not trou-

ble her. I certainly did not look for the treatment I have received. If at any time she had allowed me to see that I was unwelcome, I should have been spared some pain."

"It was certainly very strange."

"It has but one good effect, Mr. Pennell: it makes your constant kindness to me in these last few years seem the more valuable because you at least owe me nothing, — or even less than nothing," she added, faintly blushing.

Almost without consciousness of the fact, she was using her undoubted grace of voice and person. In her recent intercourse with Pennell she had hurt her own self-esteem, — that quality which answers for conscience in the selfish, — and had shocked a man whose respect she desired, just as she more or less craved some contribution from all who came near her. Aware of the flush on her face, she took up her fan and used it for a moment with nervous vigor, as Pennell's embarrassment returned.

"It is hardly worth while," he said, "to discuss such very small debts as — as yours to me. After what happened when — I mean, I misunderstood you, — oh, yes, I have been thinking about it, and I am quite sure I misunderstood you, — I hardly could hope you would ever send for me again or ask any service of me."

His eyes rose timidly from her slender feet and dainty slippers to the face almost joyously lit up by large-eyed illumination as he spoke. She

liked the words, and felt pleased at being made sure that she had not lost a subject's reverent homage; yet, knowing men, she had a sudden desire to ascertain if he honestly believed what he said. Had she not had for him some ample leaven of strong liking, she would not have cared. A mob of liliputian motives assailed her,— a sense of relief in his good opinion, a faint shame at unmerited praise, a little dislike to being patronized by Addenda Pennell's goodness, a mean pride which sought to prefer to justify the evil she had meant rather than to accept his explanation.

She hesitated, now smiling, and at last grave. In this little heart-parliament many speakers claimed the floor. At last, as he sat in wonder at her silence, she said, proudly, —

"You are wrong. I cannot have you think that you misunderstood me. I was angry with Mrs. Wynne, and I was carried away by my passion. I told you that if you would help me to punish her for her ingratitude to me I — I — you know what I said. I wish to state that I meant what I said. I will not have you think me good when I know that I was not."

"Miss Darnell!"

"Oh, it is true; and I can thank you to-day that you were honest with me. I do thank you," she added, with real earnestness; for as she talked about it the unconcealment of uttered words made the sin show darkly, and she said more than had been in her mind when she began. Speech is sometimes a friendly traitor.

"I am sorry," said Pennell, kindly. "I should have liked to be assured that I misunderstood you. I am the last man to feel that there may not be temptings to do wrong which I cannot comprehend. I have seen things in my own life, Miss Darnell, which make me feel sure that no one can fully know or measure the force of another's temptations. You have forced me to see that a woman I — that a friend has meant to do wrong; but you have not done that wrong, and it never will be done."

"Thank you," she said, while over her came some consciousness of the presence of a larger, simpler nature than her own, and of such helpful support as encourages all that is good in us to cast away the weak crutches of self-cheatery and of explanations plausible only to our self-esteem.

She had said she thanked him; and it was true. Then she added, "I wish" — and her voice broke.

"Please don't," said Pennell. "I dare say I have hurt you."

"Oh, no, no! You have been a good friend to me. I wanted to say that I wish I could say more than that. I cannot. I am a fool! Oh, there are so many — too many — things in life!"

"Yes," he said, with great effort at self-control, "life is confusing to us all, Miss Octopia, — very confusing. But you must not trouble yourself about me. I do not think that I ought to believe myself deserving of so great a gift as — as what

you are so kind as to speak of. I have put away the thought, or at least the expectation: let us say no more of it. You sent for me. What can I do for you? I have a hope that there is some real service you are going to ask. A friend in need of him is the best friend a man can have."

"That is a pretty reading of the proverb," she said, smiling, and feeling that her eyes were too full and might run over. "I do not want much. You have four thousand dollars of mine. It is in a mortgage, I think."

"Yes, — in St. Louis, a very satisfactory investment. It pays eight per cent. What about it?"

"I want you to let me have one thousand of the four thousand."

"But in that case it would have to be called in, — which it cannot be, as it has two years to run."

"But I must have it."

"Then I will arrange the matter: it is easy enough. When do you want it?"

"To-morrow."

"You shall have it; but — will you pardon me if I ask why you want it?"

"I would rather not say."

"Then I shall not ask you; but pray remember that now and always I am at your disposal."

She rose and put out her hand: "You have done more for me to-day than I can repay. Good-by."

"I will send you a check to-morrow," he said, and, going out, left her to her thoughts.

They were not all pleasant. Her recent need to think of others had beneficently taken her outside of the slowly-narrowing circle of self-care and self-contemplation, and, by relieving her of some of the morbid habits of disease, had greatly bettered her physical condition. The mind rose in the scale of soundness with the body, — slowly, of course, as when one long crouching in slavery, straightening himself, tends to walk erect. To do right became more easy, because to see the right grew more possible. The changes were fractional and irregular; but surely when Olivia hurried her relative away she did Octopia a service of inestimable proportions.

For a while she sat now as one still under the solemnizing influence of a grave moral lesson. She thought of the man who had read her so potent a sermon out of his abounding honesty and tenderness. Unhappily, she had a capacity for seeing only the conventionally ridiculous rather than the not unfriendly humorous aspects of life, and she found herself thinking of the uneasy freckled hands, and of the tormented hat with which Pennell shyly helped his embarrassments.

She reproached herself a little, and then her brother appeared upon the stage of her consciousness. If the time came when, her money being gone, he would begin to carry out his schemes relentlessly, what resource would there be? The wrong she had thought of as possible he would do. Should she tell Mr. Pennell or Mrs. Wynne

that he really knew nothing? That might answer; but could she do it? She would wait and see. The waiters on the providence of time are apt to be unconscious servants of the devil. Then, aware that she was chilly and tremulous from over-excitement, she rang for Judith, and, quite unstrung, gave way to nervousness, and for a day or two made the poor old servant uncomfortable with her unending desire for sympathetic attention.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Out of the strong shall sweetness come,
Love's honey be the meat of life."

MEANWHILE, three weeks had passed by at the little seaside village.

Roland Blake found the life sufficingly agreeable. He paid a daily visit to Mrs. Wynne, and made her happy by listening to her genealogical details of his own and other New England families and her memories of a past which he found interesting.

She had asked him on one occasion why he had desired to see her, and he had said it was a matter of a quite personal nature, and that he hoped to explain it before long. Would Mrs. Wynne do him the great kindness not to urge him further in regard to it? She was not fully satisfied, but did not see her way clear as to insisting, and Olivia, who was learning to trust him, and to whom her grandmother had reported his words, thought that really no more could be said at present; and so the matter rested.

Now and then, after he had come to know them well, he read to the old lady, to Olive's great relief, as she had grown rather weary of this form of duty. At other times he answered Olivia's or

Mrs. Wynne's numberless questions as to the great war in which he had been an actor, but of the horrors of which he talked with characteristic reluctance. Mrs. Wynne being now quite at ease about him, Olivia enjoyed such reasonable freedom as liberal circumstance provided, and in this calm atmosphere developed in mind and body to a degree which had been impossible amidst the exasperations and morbidness of her former surroundings.

The quiet breakfast-hour was a daily pleasure. Blake puzzled her at times, but interested her always, and his gravity gave her a half-felt sense of his being older than he was, and enabled her to think and speak with ease.

"I wish," he said at breakfast one morning, "that my friend Francis would come. He writes me that he will be here to-morrow, and then puts it off. I would like you to know him. Your grandmother would delight him."

Olivia was not over-eager to see the new man, — why, she did not ask herself. The life she led was full of wholesome, tranquil joy, and needed no addition to its sum of satisfactions.

"When he comes, I suppose you will take to fishing and shooting."

"He may. I have seen shooting enough. I don't think I shall want to see a fly killed the remainder of my days."

"Or a mosquito?"

"Well, that's going pretty far. Did you hear

Uncle John say yesterday that whenever a mosquito bites a Jerseyman it dies 'pizened'?"

"Oh, yes. How delightful he is! Don't you think there is a quaint vein of poetry in him? But about Mr. Francis — what sort of a person is he? Tell me everything."

"The call on me is a large one," Blake answered, smiling. "No one man can competently describe another: it requires a man and a woman, Miss Wynne. Outside, Phil is a mildly cynical commentary on the world about him. If you believed what he says, you would think ill enough of your fellows, including Philip Francis. What he does is always kind and correct. He insists that he is valuable to me because he represents commonplace opinion. I think he has the grave defect of enjoying the ridiculous more than the humorous."

"Oh! like Octopia, — my cousin Octopia Darnell."

"Octopia! Pardon me — but what a droll name!"

"It does not strike me so now. It was Octopie when her great-grandmother owned it: she was French, I believe; we have some Huguenot blood. It is not half so odd to me as the name of my grandmamma's business-man, — Addenda Pennell. Imagine the calamity of being called Addenda! It ought to prevent a man's ever getting married."

Blake laughed, and amused himself with balancing his spoon on the lip of his coffee-cup while

he thought a moment of Pennell and his clocks, and of his own errand, the fulfillment of which he kept on postponing from day to day.

"I am quite sure you will like him," she continued. "He will be here very soon."

"Indeed! How soon?"

"Oh, I cannot say. You will know he is here when you see a tall man with a slight stoop and an embarrassing friendship for his hat. When you come to see more of him you will find him a painfully accurate person, with a craze — I mean a nice kind of craze — for clocks and queer reading, and as shy as a swallow."

"I can see him. What a joy he will be to Francis! — Addenda! By the way, would you mind telling me what your own name is, Miss Wynne? I think it is pleasant to know people's names."

"Olivia," she said, and the gray eyes rose to his across the table.

"Olivia," he repeated, and then had a faint impression that it would be pleasant to call her that. "I should think people who cared for you would like to call you Olivia."

"It 's not very descriptive."

"I don't know," he said. "It rolls out softly from one's lips. Shall you sketch to-day, or are we to have our long-promised visit to the beaches?"

"Grandmamma is quite willing I should go whenever Uncle John and our nice old landlady

can arrange it. Mrs. Ludlam says she is 'waitin' for them chicken-grapes to git a little more sun;' and I believe that the business of the grape jelly will come off to-morrow. Can you go with us?"

"I? Of course. And to-day?"

"I thought I should like to sketch the meadows."

"Very good. I will have my cigar under the willows and be ready whenever you appear."

He rose, and as she went out of the room, the young man, looking after her, took note of the proud carriage of the head and its coil of brown hair. At the door she turned, smiling. "I give you a half hour," she said.

His attentive attitude struck her, the gently grave face, the look of vigor and masculine force. She went up-stairs humming an air and thinking how pleasant it all was.

As he lit his cigar and went out, he was aware of the solid form of Uncle John, looking more colossal than common by reason of a very short and much-worn pea-jacket.

"Thought you might take it neighborly if I fetched your mail up from the office. Ther 's one for you and a lot of papers. Happened to read one of 'em as I come along. Now the war 's done ther ain't much in them papers. Oh! and ther 's one for Miss Wynne; ye might hand it in to her. I 'm kind of rushed to-day."

"Thanks, Mr. Leslie," said Blake. "I will give it to her. And can you take us over to the beaches to-morrow?"

"Should n't wonder if I could," said Leslie, reflectively, and pushing back his ragged straw hat. "Ther 'll be you, and Miss Wynne, and me."

"And Mrs. Ludlam."

"After chicken-grapes, as sure as ther 's sand in Jersey; all the old women gits chicken-grape fever 'bout this time. Well, we 'll take the big bateau. We 'll stay all day, and I 'll cook the shellers for you myself. The women ken cohoot together down at the old house, and me and you, we 'll go a-fishin'."

"Would you kindly tell me what are shellers?"

"Well, I do declare. Don't know shellers. Why ther 's them, and there 's paper shells, and ther 's soft shells, which ain't got no shells really, and them 's all crabs, major; the whole bilin' jus' like people. Women is often like soft shellers, and some ain't never got no shells on 'em and you 're allus hurtin' 'em unexpected like."

Blake laughed outright. "Upon my word, Uncle John, the women must have been unkind to you in your time."

"I don't allow they were, major. What I were a-tryin' to convey is that ther 's a heap of nat'ral histry in women. Chiefly ther 's two kinds."

"Well," said Blake.

"Ther 's females and shemales, major, an' that 's the hul' of it."

"That is quite perfect; but about the beaches?"

"Well, I 'll git the boats clean and we 'll settle how we shall go to-morrow."

The major's errand began more and more to embarrass him, — to assume, indeed, a somewhat ridiculous aspect. It was one thing to decide that he owed a duty, quite another to act up to this decision with people like these, who were of his own world and seemingly well able to take care of themselves. What, too, was their relation to Darnell? and where was he? On the whole, it seemed well to wait, and perhaps, after all, to give Mr. Pennell a share of his confidence.

He was about to open his letter, when Miss Wynne appeared, and he made haste to take charge of her sketching materials.

"I expect you to take me to some good point of view, Major Blake," she said, as they moved up the road.

"I think I know the place. But may I ask you not to call me major? I should like to forget the war and go back to the ways of peaceful life. I dislike to talk about myself; but I am sure you will understand me."

"Yes, I understand you; but I can't help feeling some pride in what the North has done. I see what you mean; and yet I am afraid that if I were you I should want to keep any well-won title."

"As to that, I am proud enough of our work; but as to the label, I part from it with pleasure. I went in as a private, and it was from circumstance rather than desire that I rose. I hated to

be paid for doing what seemed to me so clear a duty."

"But every one was paid."

"No, I knew men who never took pay at all. Of course they were men who could afford to do without it. I never could make up my mind to be paid."

"I think that was noble," said Olivia.

"Thank you. It hardly looks so large to me. This way, Miss Wynne; and let us drop the war."

As he spoke, they came out of the low pine woods. "This is the place," he said, arranging her seat, and, as she sat down, throwing himself on the ferns at her feet.

"It is large for a sketch," she said. "I will take the wood corner and a bit of the meadows, with the hay-stacks on piles. The border of brown ferns comes in nicely, and those pools close by with purpled arrow-weed and spatterdocks and the fringes of pink salt-wort."

Around the wood edge came a small scow, loaded with salt grass, on top of the heap a man in a red shirt, on the bank another pulling the scow.

"That is great luck!" she cried, as she began to draw. "It is like Holland, with a difference. I am afraid you will be very tired before I am through."

"I think I can bear it," he returned, lazily stretching himself out. "But give me a scrap of paper and a pencil."

She tore out a leaf from her book. Then for a time they were silent.

At last she said, "Why don't you talk? It does not interfere with my work."

"Presently," he returned, and went on scribbling.

After a few moments she said, "What *are* you doing?"

"Some nonsense-verses."

"Let me see them."

"If you like." He gave her the paper, and she read them aloud: —

> "What do they call you, my pretty maid?
> I'm a wandering day of June, she said:
> Into the autumn woods I've strayed.
> And what are you doing, my pretty maid?
> I'm kissing September, sir, she said:
> Don't you see how he's blushing red?"

"I like it," she said. "Might I keep it?"

"If you please. It is poor stuff and at least needs to be re-touched. I will better the bargain by throwing in a letter for you which Uncle John gave me. Pardon my forgetfulness."

He took the letters from his pocket, gave one to Miss Wynne, and then, asking her permission, began to read his own. It was from Francis: —

DEAR ROLAND, — I shall be down in a week or so, unless in the mean while you tire of the place and the people you describe so agreeably. It was odd that you should have lit on the

Wynnes. I ought to tell you that Mr. Darnell has turned up at last, — a dark, handsome fellow, with admirable soft Southern manners. He talks a good deal of these Wynnes, his cousins, and I rather suspect you will some day see him at the shore. Very naturally, he speaks warmly of his obligations to you; and yet there is something about him I do not like, — I hardly know what it is, and after all there is a luxury in such dislikes as one cannot reasonably explain. It adds the charm of mystery to the exercise of an interesting human privilege. Darnell talked so much about his State that when he asked about mine I said I came from all the States. You Yankees are nearly as bad. I rather hoped that we had put an end to Stateriotism. I can see you shudder at my feeble coinage.

I have been getting places for some of our men, and shall not rest while one of them is out of a place. Taking care of others is such an agreeable form of self-flattery. On reflection, I think that one reason why I do not quite like Darnell is his name, but there are so many good causes for dislike and so many for likes that one feels as if one's bread were buttered on both sides, and therefore cannot fall without coming to grief. That is all pretty hazy, the result of being metaphysicked too much by one R. B.

I wish I liked more people, but I begin by not liking. Your friend,

PHIL.

By the way, Darnell returned the money I sent him when he was at Fort Delaware, and to-day borrowed double the amount. A delay of a few hours enables me to make this little contribution to contemporary biography. But if collecting the foibles of my kind amuse me, why should you mourn?

Blake looked up at the tranquil face above him, which now glanced across the meadows, now bent towards the sketch-block. Pretty little delicate changes went over it, like faint cloud-shadows across the breadth of grassy plains she looked at; and perhaps there were also thoughts which, like the birds high in air above her, were too near the sun of maiden consciousness to cast a shade of expression.

"What do you do," he said, at last, looking up from the letter, "when your friends vex you by making believe to be other than they are?"

The girl looked gravely down at his questioning face. "But I have no friends who are not relatives; and if I had, I should let them indulge in what fancies they like, if only they cared for me. You cannot imagine what an isolated life I have led. I used to know a good many girls of my own age in Europe, when we traveled, but we were never very long anywhere; and at home it has been different, — so that what I say is really true, that I do not know intimately a single girl of my own age. You will think that very strange, I am sure."

"Then you are quite open to womanly wooing," he said, lightly. "And pray, if you were any other woman and wished to win the friendly regard of Miss Wynne 'unattached,' as we said in the army, how would you go about it?"

"Oh, what a riddle!" she cried, as she put in here and there a decisive brush-touch, her head on one side, contemplative. Then, as if the question had captured her fuller attention, she ceased to draw, and seemed to be busy a moment with the far horizon and the umber pools girt round with rings of red.

"To ask a woman who has no friend what manner of friend she would desire, — now, that is very interesting. Could n't you help me a little? A friend, — why, that is for life, — some one to last through all changes."

"Yes."

"I should want the friend better than I am, — more just, — more exact, — oh, just every way large where I am small. And charitable, — she would have to be very charitable; I need that."

"My friend Francis says charity consists mostly in paying other people's moral debts."

"I don't think I shall like Mr. Francis. How can he be a good friend?"

"And yet he is; but his talk is apt to be a mere masquerade."

"No, I am sure I should not like that. *My* friend shall always mean what she says; and I should want her to be very firm, and very — not

afraid to tell me when I am wrong. And interesting, too; that I insist upon."

Blake studied with a certain contentment the growth of seriousness in the eyes which looked across the marshes.

"The ship we call friend will be well freighted with duties," he laughed. "And how would you repay all this devotion to Miss Wynne's moral interests?"

"Oh, I should love her well," said Olivia, quietly.

"I am answered. Here is your letter; you dropped it."

She took it as he spoke, and her face changed abruptly. She had supposed it to be from Mr. Pennell, her only correspondent. It was addressed in Octopia's handwriting. The shock was rude. Then she laughed a bitter little laugh as she opened the letter. "You can study the envelope while I read the contents."

He looked at the delicate thread-like writing, free from strong markings.

"Writing ought to tell us something of people," he said, reflectively. "I don't think it does, much. Yet the hand and the head are very intimate. St. Paul says they need each other. I think elaborate signatures mean self-conceit; don't you, Miss Wynne?"

Hearing no reply, he looked up, and saw that his companion was standing, her eyes full of tears, the letter crumpled in her hand.

Blake rose. "What is wrong?" he said. "Are you in any trouble? Can I be of use to you?"

"No; it is nothing, — nothing I can talk about. I must go home." She was evidently much disturbed.

He gathered up her sketch-books and paint-box and camp-chair, and turned to join her.

"I am afraid," he said, "that now you need that friend."

"Yes," she replied, absently; "yes." And she walked on in silence.

Many men would have found an obvious answer. Blake did not. He was surprised for a time at the strong emotion this woman's unknown trouble caused him. It was great enough to give rise for a few seconds to a sense of physical weakness which annoyed him.

A vision of solemn battle-fields came before him, — the dead, the agonized, for whom he had had no such pang as a girl's full eyes had brought him. That seemed to him inscrutable. He had a feeling of helplessness unusual in his very practical nature, and knew not that the true second-childhood of life was on him, with its weaknesses and indecisions, its mystery and its tenderness.

The yearning to help her was too great for such restraints as finer social usage and his own delicacy of character imposed upon him.

"Miss Wynne," he said, "let me be the cold

friend of just a minute. There is, I trust, no need for me to say that I have no wish to know what has hurt you." He tried to make his tones business-like and untender, but failed, as men ought to fail. "Let me advise you just to put aside your trouble for an hour. Then, when you are at home in the quiet of your room, try to think yourself some one else, and read your letter over again. That seems cool advice; and yet I am sure it is good."

Unused to kindness, the grave gentleness of his manner touched her, and the good sense of his words steadied her.

"No doubt you are right," she said; "and it is not very nice of me to make you the victim of my annoyances. I think I have usually more self-control; and indeed I have had need for it."

Then she thrust the letter into her pocket, and said resolutely, "God could not have meant one to be sad to-day."

Blake liked the sudden show of self-restraint.

"No," he said, as they went through the pine woods sweet with rich odors. "The air seems full of gladness. I wonder if the birds so gay above us have any consciousness of time. Let us live in the blithe day with them for counselors, and let to-morrow take counsel of them afresh."

"Ah, but there is that terrible to-morrow!" She was still thinking of what it might bring.

"To-morrow is the poet of hope," he cried, laughing at his conceit; "and here is the first red maple leaf, — red and gold."

And thus, with jesting talk of men and things, he won her thoughts from herself and forced her by the interest of his chat to forget the outside world, its problems and its griefs. As one feels in water the buoyancy with which it lessens our weight and lifts us, she felt, without analysis of its causes, the elevating and kindly support of the influences this man brought to help her.

Meanwhile, the pines bent down with their sombre foliage, and the southward bound birds called to one another, "It is all right," and the swaying golden-rods nodded socially, "We were just so when we were young." And then they came to the inn door, where Olivia, taking her sketching material from Blake, said, "I am greatly obliged to you." Upon which he returned, "You will not forget my sketch," and walked away, while Olivia went slowly up-stairs. They were both busily thinking of one man.

Roland Blake felt that the time was near when he must take some action as to Richard Darnell. What had seemed a duty before he knew the Wynnes had ripened by degrees into a yet more imperative form of obligation. They were attractive people and singularly isolated. Any day they might leave their present home and that be still unsaid which might lead to a lifetime of regret. He had begun to think he would talk to Mr. Pennell; and it was a relief to feel sure that with Darnell himself he might deal if no other way should open. Although he knew Darnell to

be a man capable of the darkest crime, he had as yet no distinct evidence as to his having in any way desired to injure his relatives; to them in no case could he say what he knew of Darnell. After a long bout of self-counsel, he gave it up, and went a-fishing.

The matter assumed for Olivia a more definite shape.

"Grandmamma," she said, "here is a letter from Octopia. As you expected, she has found out where we are."

"Well, I suppose we shall see her here soon. What does she say? Read me her letter."

Olivia sat down. "I have read it but once, grandmamma, and it is not like my cousin, — not at all like her. I hardly know what to make of it. At first it troubled me, because it is so mysterious, — I do so hate secrets; but I — I was walking with Mr. Blake when I read it and I was able to put it aside for a while. But it means — oh, it does surely mean that we are going to have some new trouble. And we have been so happy!"

"Well, read it, my dear." Olive obeyed.

"'DEAREST OLIVE, — How shall I ever forgive you and my dear cousin for running away and leaving me with hardly a word? It makes me feel that in my weakness and my pain I may have asked too much of you and worn out your gentle patience' —

"My gentle patience, grandmamma!"

"Well, go on."

"'Even the claims of gratitude I have reason to know may in time become valueless, for you have been good to me, and now I miss the more your soft touch and the morning kiss. Perhaps some day you or yours may need me again; and be assured that I shall not fail you in your necessity. I did not once; I shall not again.

"'If by any chance my brother Dick should go to see you, as I think he will, you will be kind to him, dear, will you not?'

"No, I will not," said Olivia.

"Olive! Olive!" returned Mrs. Wynne, "try to keep your temper. I have kept mine under worse provocation; and really, considering all things, Octopia has not said anything much out of the way."

"She means — oh, you know what she means. I do not see why the man is coming here. I said I would not ask you again what Octopia's mystifications are about; and I will not; it hurts and pains you, I know; but nothing — nothing could be worse for me than to live in the midst of her whims and affection and hints. If that man drives me to the wall I will ask him what it all means. Some one shall tell me."

"You would be insane, Olive. He knows nothing. You would only make him guess that there is something. I am sure his sister would not tell him. Oh, why — why cannot you rest content and leave me a little peaceful comfort? I cannot have long to live. Why do you make me so unhappy?"

"They must let me alone," said the girl. "Why am I always the one to be blamed? Let me write to Octopia and say we never wish to see her any more, — never! never! Let her do what she likes."

"I forbid you to answer her, Olive. I shall write myself. As to Richard Darnell, if he comes, — which is not likely, — give him his dismissal kindly: any man has a right to that. If you could have married him, all our troubles would have been over; but, as you will not, we must get on as we can. Mind, dear, I don't say I like him; but you might, you know."

Olivia made no reply.

Octopia had said she would not come to them unasked; Olive did not believe her.

At last she sat down and wrote to Mr. Pennell that if it were possible for him to come to the Court-house and pay them a visit of a few days it would be agreeable. There was nobody in the house but a Mr. Blake, whom her grandmother liked because, being New Hampshire born, he had a due reverence for the Wynnes. The fishing was good, and the air delightful.

The next day was rainy, and Olivia, who was excited and worried, was not sorry to put off their visit to the beaches. Blake read to them, and they sketched the wet willows, and Uncle John came along and discoursed of "wracks" and finally took the major away up the road to see the "most awrfullest hornets' nest," which he proposed to smoke out that night, seeing that "them thar

hornets' nests does cure up the asthma right quick," and had become desirable as a means of improving Mrs. Leslie's temper through the re-establishment of her health.

The rain kept up for the usual three days of a norther, and somehow the little inn seemed pleasant enough to its inmates. The old twisted-legged piano, which in its youth had known the "Battle of Prague," was startled into life with bits of Beethoven, until at last something went wrong with it inside and it apparently gave up the ghost of its musical life, amidst unseemly mirth. Then a good walk on the never wet sandy roads was always in order, until at last they woke to sunshine again.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Nightmare of youth, the spectre of himself."

It is said that in the best of us there is that which ought to enable us to understand every form of wickedness, — that we all possess this alphabet of hell, and only do not use it. Yet nothing entirely explains one human being to another, or, indeed, to himself.

There are crimes which insult all human nature, and surely of all of them the most horribly difficult to comprehend is the betrayal of one's country. It seems to involve indirectly almost every other sin. Yet why it should have troubled Richard Darnell less than his effort at a single murder were hard to say. Nevertheless this was true. He judged himself somewhat by the consequences of his acts, and he had intellectual limitations in his capacity for seeing these. The cause of the Confederacy was lost before he began to betray it, so that it had not been gravely hurt by him. He had, too, the gambler's temperament, which made a risk interest him in proportion to its greatness. Reckless courage removes some obstacles to crime, and the sensual needs of a life of unrestrained indulgence are the final bribes.

Darnell had but one cowardice, — the fear of the public opinion of the caste to which he belonged. He had imperiled himself in this direction more than once, but had never come to complete wreck. The large, open treachery of an Arnold would have been for him difficult.

Like most men of his type, he retained for a long while, and then, as we have seen, pretended to retain, some special form of respect for truth. Even at his worst a lie cost him something. He did not cheat at cards; and to kill would have been for him easier than to lie. A cruel murderer has been known to reproach one to whom he was calmly describing his crime for supposing he could tell a deliberate falsehood.

Darnell still clung to this shred of sentiment. "I told you, Octopia," he said, "that I would not trouble Mrs. Wynne. Why you have become so tender all of a sudden I cannot tell. As to the money, it has gone. I thought I could do better in stocks in Philadelphia; but I found it no easier there than here."

"You are foolish to think you can gamble with those men on Wall Street. How much do you want to-day?"

She was in a state of sad recklessness, the outcome of her final realization of Richard's indifferent selfishness and her own wrong-doing. She had a morbid eagerness to give it all and get done with it and see what would happen. It made her lavish when she might have restrained him.

As to Pennell, who had come to understand the situation, he smiled a little as he honored each check in turn, and, if he had been given to self-analysis, would have perceived that he did not quite dislike the idea that Miss Darnell was expending her small capital. There was in this a flavor of the commercial training of the man, and he would have disliked it if it had been thus grossly presented to his consciousness.

Darnell said he would like to have a few hundreds.

"How much? I can't write a check for a few hundreds. What do you want?"

"Well, four hundred will answer."

He took the check. "Thank you, dear Octy," he said. "I think of going to Virginia for a week." He did not say he was going.

"And what for?"

"Oh, well, there are those coal-lands in Kanawha: it seems possible now that something might be made out of them. Don't you think Pennell would" —

"We will leave Mr. Pennell out of the question; I will not have you applying to him."

"By George! if you talk to me in that way I shall consider our little bargain at an end. I have no doubt Mrs. Wynne would lend us the money I want."

"My God, Dick, have you no pity left? Am I as nothing in your eyes? Have you lost all sense of honor?" She was beset by the Nemesis

of the menace which she herself had more or less distinctly employed.

"Why I should not be free to borrow money," he said, "I do not see." He began to dread his sister's interference. "Do you think, Octy, that there is any chance for me with Olivia?"

"I do not know. You have done your best to lessen your chances. Of course Mr. Pennell knows well enough how foolishly you have been living. What he knows they will know. I sometimes think you must be mad. And as to Olive, you seem to have been as indifferent of late as if you cared nothing for her. Women resent such neglect."

"I wrote to her twice last week," he returned, sullenly. It was true. She had burned his letters unopened. "If," he added, "you had let the matter alone I should have done better."

"You are ungrateful, Dick." She was sorely hurt.

"Well, will you go with me to the Court-house?"

"I will not."

"Then I think I shall go alone."

She was feeling the strain of this interview in renewed physical fatigue, and longed to have it over. She was pretty sure that he would not limit his errand to seeing Olivia and deciding his fate; but what could she do that she had not done?

"No, don't kiss me," she said. "What have

I done that I should suffer so through you? Oh, Dick! Dick!" Then she started up. "Let us go away, brother," she cried. "I have two thousand dollars left. I — I can borrow some: I think I can. We will go out West and begin life over again, — oh, we could do it! I could be so strong if you would only try to be good again. Won't you, Dick?"

The exaltation of a woman's noblest hope was in her eyes as she stood facing him.

"Come," she said, yearningly. "You will come?"

He was silent a moment, and, as he stood, put the check automatically in his breast-pocket. The act broke in upon the rising impulse to accept this offer and become free in that large Western land.

She saw his doubt, and knew him well. "Shall it be, Dick? We should like it, — the plains, and cattle, and a life in the saddle; and if there were risks, Indians and what not, — oh, you would like them."

As he withdrew his hand he felt the rustle of the check. It was a fatal possession.

"I will see, Octy. You are very good. I will see when I come back."

Then she knew that she had failed, but not that she herself had provided that which made success just then improbable. She should have preached to empty pockets.

As for Darnell, a moment and the touch of a

bit of paper sufficed to turn him. The sins of the minute are visited on their offspring the years; and the time came to Darnell when this little fraction of a day was remembered with that bitterness of regret which is the remorse for murdered opportunity.

As he went out she found strength to say, "Perhaps you will think better of it then."

He was so handsome, she thought, as he paused at the door, so strong, and so distinguished in bearing. It added to her disappointment. She was hurt all over, as it were.

He said he would really consider it, and went away, leaving the tall woman steadying herself with a hand-clutch that trembled on the chair-back.

Not long after she wrote to Mr. Pennell, who had, however, left the city, and also to Olivia the letter we have read. She could not make up her mind to say to Mrs. Wynne, "I have done wrong;" still less was it possible for her to explain that Richard knew nothing they need fear. How could she do this? She made up her mind that there was nothing she could do but live on, in the hope that Richard would no more dare cheat them into believing that he possessed knowledge which he had not than she had dared to use that which was truly available.

The next moment she was laughing, — that wild, emotional laugh which is but weeping in pitiful masquerade, — and found herself no more

than just able to summon Judith, who aided her with such mechanical routine of sympathetic expressions and manual assistance as enduring habit had made easy.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Ah! not without some tender throes
Opes the red bosom of the rose."

WHEN Olivia came down to breakfast Roland Blake was standing at the open window of the little dining-room.

"Good-morning, Miss Wynne," he said. "Come and see what the good night has done for us in the way of weather." He was busily arranging a triple gang of hooks on a line for the benefit of autumnal lingerers among the sheep's-head.

She came into the window-place, and they looked out together. A strong northwest wind was tearing the clouds and driving them like the white scuds of foam on the sea beneath. There was a virginal purity in the storm-cleansed air. The rain was over. A little vapor was crawling up the dark slopes of the newly-sunned shingle roofs. The clink of the blacksmith's hammer sounded up the road, and miles away the hoarse roar of the breakers was faintly audible.

"How beautiful it is!" she said. "And, oh, there is Uncle John. I must ask him if we are to see those beaches to-day."

As she turned to go, Blake said, "Take care." He was too late. One of the hooks caught in the

shoulder of her dress, and, as he instantly let go his hold, a second fastened itself short in his coat-sleeve and entered his arm. He cried, instinctively, —

"Don't move for a moment. It did not hurt you, I trust? I am rather better caught."

They were very close together, — so near, indeed, that he was unable to use his free arm to extricate her.

The personal contact troubled the girl. "Pull it out," she said; "tear the dress;" and she flushed, and then added, "Pardon me: I hurt you. Is n't it ridiculous?"

"Halloa, Uncle John! come in here, — quick, please," he said. Then they both laughed.

When Uncle John, having put on his large silver spectacles, became aware of the situation, he broke out into a laugh which filled the little room. "Waal, now," he said, "major, no pawson could 'a' done it better. You air j'ined together sure enough. You jus' hold on and I 'll divorce you."

Blake was angry. "Don't talk: just pull it out of the sleeve. Can't you see I am suffering?" And he was — for the woman.

"Waal, a hook are n't much for a man 's bin as much shot at as you. Thar!"

"Thank you," said Olivia. "I begin to sympathize with fish. Are you in pain, Mr. Blake?"

"No: it is of no moment. I 'll be back presently." And so saying, he went out with Leslie. There was a little rough surgery done in the

kitchen, and he returned in some twenty minutes, laughing.

"I 'm all right, Miss Wynne."

Miss Wynne was gone, and the breakfast untouched.

He sat down and waited, hoping that she would return. He missed her, and began to reflect that she had become to him in some way necessary. The little scene in the window had strangely affected him. He rose and poured out his cup of coffee, and then again sat down. By her plate he had put a mass of golden-rod and asters; he glanced at them, and a feeling of dismay came over him. He had not made love to her or been socially guilty of anything akin to courtship: he had innocently committed the more fatal error of showing to a rich feminine nature the best that there was in an upright gentleman with a dangerous flavor of poetry and playful humor, and a mind of unusual force. He was faintly conscious that she liked to be with him, but beyond that he did not dare to go in his effort at guiding conclusions.

That he might be blamed by some one annoyed him. The girl was almost alone in the world, — certainly unguarded, — and her grandmother was very old and apparently more thoughtful of her own comfort than of Miss Wynne.

"I am too self-critical," he said to himself. In fact, he had that fine honor which is to mere honesty as is the flower to the leaf.

He could go away. He could speak to Mrs. Wynne. He could wait; but for what? And there was that Darnell business. The sense of possible danger or discomfort to this woman made him decide that to leave her now was impossible.

She came in, looking pale, as he thought, took up the flowers, and, thanking him, sat down and began to talk rapidly. She hoped his arm did not hurt him; and had he arranged for the beaches? and would Mrs. Ludlam go?

By and by they finished their breakfast, both having some sense of constraint upon them.

Then she went out, leaving her flowers; but when they assembled at the door for their expedition he saw that she wore a spray of the yellow plumes in her belt.

As they were about to start, the little stage from Cape May drove up, and, to their surprise, Addenda Pennell and Philip Francis got out.

The former shook hands with Olivia. "Why, Miss Olivia," he said, "you look like another woman."

"I feel like one. Mr. Blake, our oldest friend, Mr. Pennell."

"I think we have met before," said Blake, smiling. "I am glad to see you again."

"Have you been here long?" inquired Pennell.

"About three or four weeks."

"Indeed! And how is Mrs. Wynne, Miss Olivia?"

"Oh, wonderfully well. She will see you later;

you know she sees no one but me in the morning, and to-day I am off duty because we are going to the beaches."

Then Francis, who had been looking after his baggage and had merely lifted his hat, came up, and was duly presented to Miss Wynne.

"Indeed," he said, "I am an older acquaintance of Miss Wynne than you are, Blake." Olivia laughed. "It is a pretty forlorn old town you have all come to. What on earth do you do with yourselves all day?"

"We sew, we read, we sketch, we walk, and on Sunday we go to church."

"But, as I neither sew, nor sketch, nor read all day, unless it is a week of Sundays here, like a camp-meeting, I do not see where my resources are to lie."

"I forgot to say we talk," said Olivia. "But now you must all go to the beaches with us. It is a perfect day."

A half hour later they were at the bank of the nearest water-way.

"You will have to pull Miss Wynne in the small bateau," said Leslie. "Guess I 'll take care of the rest. My big boat 's jes' a leetle mawsel wet." The old fellow's eyes twinkled as they rowed away.

The coast of New Jersey is guarded from the sea along most of its length by a vast system of inland water navigable for small craft. Countless marshy inlands lie between the crossing net-work

of salt streams, and to the eastward vast beaches hold the sea at bay.

Through these water-ways the boats glided under the warm sun of a faultless September morning. On the banks at the water-line the sedge oysters hung thick. Uncle John stopped now and then to gather the best, or waded ashore to secure a supply of luckless shedder crabs for dinner. On the salt boggy islands long grasses sparkled in the light, and here and there a fish rose and broke the brown water.

A sense of happy peace came upon the girl as she lay back in the stern and let her hands hang over the low thwarts to feel the babble and caress of the water. Sometimes, as they followed Leslie, the boat passed through bayous so narrow that the oars disturbed the monastic life of mussel and sedge-oyster on the black mud of the banks, then they shot out into a gleaming thoroughfare and felt the rough greeting of the viking north wind.

That these two young people had come to know each other so well that silence had ceased to seem awkward might have been significant. The boom of the tumbled surf grew nearer. Miss Wynne laughed gently, a girl's pure laugh of joy, — an inheritance from childhood's possibilities of expression. He looked at her, wishing she had not so tied down the broad straw hat as to hide that pleasant profile, — the nose that was yet a trifle pronounced, the chin that was so full and strong

that interpretative nature had felt the need of qualifying it with the comment of a dimple.

"Why do you laugh?" he said. "What amuses you?"

"I am not amused; I am only happy. Unless one says so, there is no other way to tell except just to laugh."

"And what makes you happy?"

"What makes any one happy, Mr. Blake?"

"Really, I do not know. As a Yankee, it is my normal function to ask questions. When one thinks it over, we Yankees have answered more grave questions for the world than we have asked it."

"Yes, that is true. I envy those who have helped to answer them."

"But envy is incompatible with happiness," he laughed.

"And yet I am happy," she said, contentment in her whole attitude. "Why, all nature to-day is like a fairy godmother fetching me gifts. The sun says, 'I am yours,' and the water whispers pleasant things — oh, very nice little secrets — to my fingers as it goes by, and the wind is like a friendly whisper, and I am young and well, and how should I not be happy? I wish I were a poet to-day."

"Perhaps you are."

"I? — oh, no," and she laughed, a good honest laugh; "I am only a foolishly glad young woman. But, now I have confessed myself, pray what were

you thinking of? You were silent too. Were your thoughts worth a penny? The Spanish peasants have a much nicer way of putting it. They say, 'Give me of the gold of your thoughts.'"

"How pretty!" he said. "If you really want to know, my mind was on a holiday wandering. I was thinking of my boy-life, and of our rough New England coast, and of Paris, and of what the future holds for me in its shut hand."

"You will go back to your work as an engineer, I suppose. How comfortably it must steady a person to have regular duties and to feel that they are enlarging all the time! Oh, that is where a girl's life is wanting! And yet I am sure I should not desire to be a man."

"You are quite right. I find I am beginning to feel the want of daily duties. I think I shall very soon return to France and complete my course at the School of Mines."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Ah! here we are." And, as he spoke, the boat ran upon the inner shore of the boggy green marsh which lay to landward of the great island-beach.

Mrs. Ludlam, intent on chicken-grapes, walked up towards the single small house which lay at the north end of the island, and the rest of the party kept on across a raised bank towards the sea. Uncle John felt all the importance of a guide. "Them 's fiddlers, Miss," he said, — "fiddler crabs. I can jus' set and see them by the

hour. There 's a lop-sidedness about them critters that 's jus' like some men." Pennell was very happy, and asked innumerable questions. Then they watched the fish-hawks swoop down on their prey and rise empty-handed or laden, while Olivia gathered the several varieties of primrose and asters and, to her delight, a rare plume of white golden-rod.

Uncle John had some queer comment on all they saw. He was an uneducated observer, with a touch of the sentiment so often to be found in the American of his class, the lonely dweller in woods or by the sea.

"Now, Mr. Pennell, them mulleins is cur'ous;" as he spoke, he gave one to Olivia. "They 're late flow'rin' on the beaches. If you bend one of 'em like this, it don't break short-like, and in about a week, maybe, it jus' turns up straight, — this way. It don't mend, you see, Miss, but it straightens up."

"That is singular," said Blake.

"Waal, the pine 'll do much the same. If you cut off the top of the tree, the next branches they turns up. But them mulleins, — seems to me they 're a bit like a man thet 's done somethin' wrong and jus' sets himself to straighten up."

"Here 's another poet," said Blake aside to Miss Wynne.

"Yes. Is n't he delightful?"

Pennell stood still, gravely contemplative. "I pity that mullein," he said, seriously, — "and the man."

"Not if he gets straight," returned Olivia.

"Oh, fellows that go quite crooked once don't get straight," remarked Francis, while Pennell turned and walked on in advance of the little group.

"Don't believe that," said Uncle John, and presently was deep in tales of shipwreck.

Then Olivia joined Pennell and talked of her grandmother, while Francis strayed aside to inspect an ants' nest; so that Leslie and Blake were left together.

"Colonel," said the former, who liked titles and occasionally promoted the young man a grade or two, "I saw a man at the Cape wharf day before yesterday inquirin' about Mrs. Wynne. He heard Joe Holmes askin' if I would take a trunk to the Court-house. He wanted to know who was stayin' here; and when I told him thar were Mrs. Wynne and the young woman and you, he said he knowed you."

"Indeed! And what was his name?"

"I did n't mind to ask him, sir. He was darkish-complected, and had a heap of hair on his upper lip; good-lookin' man; straight as a ma'sh cat-tail."

Blake had little doubt as to his identity. "Did he say he was related to Mrs. Wynne?"

"Now I mind me, he did. Guess he 'll be along soon. He seemed to want to hear all about you folks."

"I think I know him. And now, here we are

together again; and what is the programme? Who is in command?"

Mr. Pennell thought he would like to see the life-saving station, and how the mortar was used to cast a line to a ship. Francis had been employing his sufficiently busy powers of observation all the morning. He too professed intense interest in life-boats, and wished to know a little more about Richard Holmes, the hero of the coast-guard, and would go with Mr. Pennell, whom he found an agreeable study. Then Blake said that if Miss Wynne liked to sketch the sand-dunes he was at her service, and they could be back in time to lunch at one.

"And be sure you see Booby-town," said Leslie; but when Miss Wynne appealed to him to know what this was, the old fellow replied that it was "where them boobies is."

Francis ironically advised his friend to acquire right of citizenship in Booby-town, which would perhaps be a sufficient recognition of his folly in having wasted four years in killing men. Then Blake said the honor ought to be divided, on which Francis declared that he too was instinctively drawn towards Booby-town, and would leave Mr. Pennell to the educating influences of Uncle John.

"It sounds promising," he said. "Now, major, you have only to obey your subjectivity in order to attain Booby-town."

"Phil! Phil!" cried Blake, laughing, "don't venture near that town; you will never get away."

Pennell listened, and gravely examined Francis's remark. The latter went on with unmoved countenance to state that trustful obedience to assimilative yearnings might assist the dubious seeker for Booby-town. There was saucy recognition in Olivia's eyes, and a faint sense of not liking the chaff because of its resemblance to some one's familiar wheat.

"Oh, talk English," said Blake, "or good Jersey, Phil. Miss Wynne won't understand your camp-fire nonsense. He is nothing but an old coffee-cooler, Mr. Pennell."

"And what is a coffee-cooler?" inquired Uncle John.

"A man who blows his coffee while the brigade is going by into action. But, while you cool coffee, where is and what is Booby-town?"

"Foller yer nose, down the beach, sou-sou-west," explained Leslie.

"That 's clear, Mr. Leslie," cried Francis. "Miss Wynne, how can a man with Blake's intimate relations with nature fail to have some latent cognition of Booby-town! Intuitive acceptance of the dominant is the true needle of the soul."

"Phil! Phil! for shame!" cried his friend.

"The dominant!" exclaimed Pennell, honestly endeavoring to comprehend.

"Don't mind him," explained Blake. "He can't help it."

"I was alluding to Mr. Leslie's directions," laughed Francis.

Every one laughed, — some for reason, some for company in mirth.

"My latent benevolence becomes radiant at times," said Francis, "like heat."

"Oh, a truce, a truce, Phil! Let 's be off."

"A truce? with pleasure. Peace, if you like. I thought you might prefer Concord."

"He is very bad to-day, Miss Wynne. Let us go."

"I think Mr. Francis spoke of joining us," said Olivia. "I should like to be further instructed." In fact, she was shyly timid as to this walk. Her maiden conscience was alert and on guard.

Francis said he should like it, and Blake pretended delight as they strolled off down the white sand beach.

"You took your time about coming to the Courthouse, Phil," said Blake, conscious that the disappointment had not been without mitigation.

"It does not seem to have taken the bloom out of his youthful cheek, Miss Wynne. I have noticed that some elderly people show decay by an improvement in color. I don't mean to offer any excuses for absence. My acquaintance with you is of so much older date than my friend's that I can afford to retire behind your appreciation of my character."

"Upon my word," said Miss Wynne, "I don't think our mode of introduction was altogether creditable to you, — a warrior who took refuge from rain!"

"Oh, you can't make it worse than I made it when I related it to Blake. It lost nothing of its picturesqueness; and I must say I was flattered at having been taken for Mr. Darnell."

Blake was silent.

"Well," said Olivia, quietly, — not quite liking the talk, — "as I had never seen my cousin, I might have taken any one for him. Where did you see him?"

"Oh, you know, after he got to Fort Delaware I sent him some little luxuries."

"After he got to Fort Delaware! Then you knew him before?"

"Yes. I knew him through my friend Blake. And after I was wounded, I came up to Fortress Monroe on the same boat with him."

The moment he spoke he was conscious that he had made a social stumble, as he saw Miss Wynne glance quickly at Blake, who said at once, —

"I knew Mr. Darnell slightly. We met by an odd accident."

"So I have heard."

Olivia made no further comment in words, but it seemed to her odd that in some way Darnell had never before been mentioned by Mr. Blake. It troubled her, and yet she hardly knew why.

Presently they were between the sand-dunes and the restless sea, — Blake quiet and monosyllabic, Francis in his gayest mood of reckless merriment, Olivia happy, amused, and joyous. At length, a mile or more down the beach, they

climbed a sand-hillock and sat down. To left and right the dunes stretched north and south. Landward rose a wood of oaks and maple touched with the faint gold and red of hastening autumn days. The trumpet-creeper was over them in arbored masses and swung swaying clusters in the fresh salt air. About them on the stunted cedars the fox grapes hung thick. Below were scant bushes, — honest yellow of golden-rod, and purple asters, with the sand-loving prickly pear and browning ferns.

Francis stood up, smiling as usual, — a man restless in mind and legs; Olivia looked about her and was silent; and Blake sat watching the green mounds of water crash into tumbled snow upon the sands below them, the tide being at full flood. The air, the sea, the sky, were full of gentle interpretations for these two, while their companion was quite outside of their mood of relationship to the sunny world about them.

Blake spoke first: —

> "The north wind shall my kinsman be,
> My soul call cousin with the sea" —

"The ma'sh a mother-in-law to me," cried Francis.

"You are insufferable, Phil."

"Acceptivity is not regnant in all souls, Roland. Good-by. I shall take a look for Booby-town. Be back in a half hour. You won't come? Well, — if you only knew, Miss Wynne, how much metaphysics I have endured at his hands or lips, you

would consider my desires for vengeance natural. I leave you at his mercy. He is pretty bad. I have half a mind to give you a text, Roland, in case you should chance to lack ideas."

"Clear out, wretch!" shouted Blake; and the tormentor went laughing around the dune and was lost to sight.

And now she was glad at the minute; he jarred on her sense of contentment with the good things around her.

"I was here last week at dusk," said Blake. "You can't imagine how weird it was. These dead trees — holly and scrub oaks, I think — buried in the moving dunes, and on top those yet alive bent landward, with their branches stretched away from the shouting sea, like flying things agonized with fear."

"How strange! I should like to see it at sunset; but I can imagine it. How splendid the rollers are! See that one! It must be a mile long. How straight it is!"

"It brings back to me, Miss Wynne, a strange memory. You know how often the rush of the hurrying waves has been compared to a charge. I was standing on the brow of Cemetery Hill at Gettysburg when we saw the gallant charge of the Virginians and Texans. As I watched them a half mile away, the recollection of our seaside at home and of the proud march of these long rollers came over me with a sort of shock of remembrance, — the steady line getting larger as it

came, the small breaks and confusions here and there, the growing sound, the last wild rush and crash and thunder and the swift retreat. I had a moment of confidence in the thought of our surely routed waves, just as if it made the result certain. They were almost on us before I got it out of my head. Poor fellows!"

"I can see it. How little you speak of the war, Mr. Blake! I hardly ever heard you say much."

"No. It was for me a merely sad duty. I hated it. I hope I did it well."

"I am sure you did."

"Thank you," he said, simply, and they were silent a moment, while Olivia took up the sand in her hands and lightly shook it through her fingers as he watched them. She had a mysterious pleasure in the cool white contact.

"You make a nice hour-glass, Miss Wynne." A line of "Locksley Hall" came into his mind. He checked his speech in time. She laughed gayly.

"My hour-glass has advantages." And she shut her hand. "Now time stops. What are you saying, Mr. Blake? Sometimes you have a way of saying things with your lips but not aloud. It is not at all fair, because I must have suggested the thought."

He was murmuring, —

> "Oh, grant to me the endless chime
> Of one unchanged, unchanging hour."

"Some reflections are scarcely worthy of the honors of speech," he replied.

"But I am curious. I always want to know. Are you ever curious, like a girl, — really curious?"

"I?" he said. "I have all of Eve in me."

"Then" — and she hesitated a little — "will you mind my asking you why you wanted to know where you could find us? You asked Mr. Pennell, you know."

He was startled: he was at that moment thinking of this very matter.

"Yes," he returned. "I had a reason, and a good one."

"Indeed! oh, now I am really curious."

"Have you any near friend, Miss Wynne, — a man, I mean, — whom I could talk to?"

Olivia wondered, and was a little troubled also. He felt that he had put the matter awkwardly, and, divining her possible difficulty, said, in haste, —

"Something came to my knowledge in the war which made me think I ought to see Mrs. Wynne and mention it. It may be of little real moment, but it may be serious."

She looked her concern.

"I am puzzled what to do about it."

"There is only Mr. Pennell," she said.

"I wish I knew him better. I should like to wait, but events do not wait for us."

"You are very mysterious; and I hate mysteries. Why not tell me? or why speak of it to me at all, if you cannot tell me?"

"But you made me. I could not help it."

"It is not about my father?" she exclaimed.

"Your father! no. I wish now I had not spoken. If I had had a little more common sense I would not have said a word; but I cannot fib to you. I had to say something, and, to tell you the simple truth, I am puzzled what to say. I can see, too, that I have troubled you; and I — I would do anything rather than to pain you. You will forgive me?" And he sought answer in her lifted eyes.

"There does not seem much to forgive," she answered.

"Yes, yes, there is. I have spoiled a pleasant day for you; I have seemed to distrust what I trust utterly. What a world is this! We try to do right, and it is wrong. We grieve what we yearn to help. If you were a man, a friend, I could talk to you better; but now I am at a standstill. I wish you were yourself and not yourself" — and he laughed rather strangely.

A tiny little temptation arose and grew in the woman's heart. His evident trouble began to make sharp claims on her tender sympathies. "But am I not a friend?" she said, gently. "At least I would rather you did not think I am not."

"I think nothing but good of you."

"Suppose, then, I tell you that I will ask nothing more, — that as a friend I will trust you to do right, just like one man with another."

"Thank you," he said. "If I felt that you would be really secure from worry, I should be

satisfied. I think I see my way better now. It is but a matter of days."

"Only one thing more, Mr. Blake; you will not talk to grandmamma? She is very old."

"No; that was my first obstacle. I had not realized that I should have to deal with a woman so aged and inert."

"Well, then, that is all," she said, rising.

"I am immeasurably grateful," he replied. His tones were richer in meaning than his words.

"I like thanks," she returned, smiling. "They help me to believe a little in my own goodness."

She was embarrassed by his manner, and said whatever came first into her mind, laughing as she stood, for he delayed to rise. Then she had a shock half joy, half amazement, as when to a spring bud the wooing sun first makes clear his gentle purpose, — a flush, a stir, a tremor. He had taken her hand as she stood, and put it to his forehead, and, saying only, "God bless you!" rose, and went down the sand-dune.

She stood a second speechless and flushed. Then she looked after the young man and at the back of her hand, and put it up quite near to her own lips; but whether she kissed it or not remains unknown to this day. Haply she thought that the form the matter had taken was unusual as between the two manly friends they had pretended to be. The humorous aspect of it helped her; for to run away like a doe was her deep desire.

He waited at the foot of the hill, but said noth-

ing, the full force of nature's greatest ferment having him in turbulent possession.

And now the world was with them again as Francis came up through the space between the dunes.

"I got quite lost, Miss Wynne," he said, "or I should have relieved you sooner. Blake can be pretty dull at his worst. Was he metaphysical, romantic, or practical? I think you look a little puzzled. Tell me, now: did you really understand him?"

"I shall leave Mr. Blake to reply," said Olivia.

"Never trust what Francis may say about me. Some people preserve their friendships, and some people pickle them."

"I am incapable of denying anything so clever," cried Francis; and the others found relief in copartnership of laughter.

Presently Blake said he would walk on rapidly to tell Uncle John they would be on hand for lunch in a few minutes.

"There goes a dangerously good man," said Francis. "If he does n't become conceited before he 's forty it will be due to my education of him."

"Is he so very nice?" she said, shyly.

"Oh, I suspect that women don't think so. Rather a man's man. My sister declares that he is dull."

Olivia began to have the obstinate sense of being right which belongs to minorities. "I should hardly call him dull," she said. "He is

thoughtful and reserved at times, — rather, on the whole, an interesting man, I should say; but then my experience of men is so limited."

Philip's sister had said that Blake was her brother's one love-affair. "Interesting? Yes," he returned, "he is a man with a career before him. It used to be curious to me to see him in action. The worse the odds, the calmer he got."

"I wonder," thought Olivia, remembering his recent emotion, "if he believed the odds to be in his favor." She colored faintly.

"When we were sergeants of cavalry in the West I saw him volunteer to cross a river in face of the enemy's sharpshooters to see if it could be forded. Four men tried it, but only Blake came back alive. On the bank he found me wounded: I always caught it. He dismounted under an awful fire and put me on his horse and carried me into shelter. The rebs ceased firing when they saw it. If they had not, I should not be here to tell the tale."

"No wonder you are friends," she said, and liked him from that minute.

"Don't tell Blake. He would never forgive me, and he does endlessly lecture me."

"I will be very discreet," she returned, much amused.

"But he is always doing these absurd things. You know, Miss Wynne, a good many of us are two people, and one is constantly getting us into scrapes and leaving the other to get us out."

"I don't think I fully understand you."

"Let me explain. Blake will do well enough for illustration. At times, for a while he is a romantic gentleman, seeing only the poetical and chivalrous aspect of things, and acting on his creed of the hour. Then in walks the other Roland Blake, a practical New-Englander of this century, and has to take the consequences of the other fellow's romance."

"I see," she said, smiling. "But what a curious mode of stating it." She was thinking that it really made clearer to her some things which she had found it difficult to comprehend.

Francis went on: "Now his saving your cousin Mr. Darnell's life was a fair example of what I mean."

"Yes," she returned. "Mr. Darnell told me about it."

"Now, that was Roland Blake all over, Miss Wynne."

Olive liked it, and walked on in momentary silence, wondering again why Mr. Blake had never mentioned so singular a story in their many talks. Presently she remarked, "We must hurry a little," and said something about fish-hawks.

Francis glanced at her with increasing curiosity. He began to have certain interesting suspicions as to his friend's relation to the handsome girl at his side. Then he merrily recalled his visit in New York, and the talk drifted about pleasantly with chat of men and things.

Very soon they were at the house, and had to confess that they had never seen Booby-town. Uncle John declared it was the only thing worth seeing in all New Jersey, and described it vividly to Olivia as she sat in the kitchen by the fire, watching him roast soft-shell crabs, — a thing "not to be trusted to no woman."

"Now, you takes a big clam shell and puts in a lot of sedge eysters, and a crab right in amongst 'em, and you shuts the two shells on the whole family, and ties a wire round, — so, — and sticks 'em in the coals. Them boobies is blue heron There 's a thousand on 'em; and for squawkin', a camp-meetin' ain't nothin' to 'em. The young uns, they 're about six feathers on two sticks. I do wish you 'd 'a' seen them boobies. It raises a man's notions of human nature when he sees beasts like them. Fish done, Mrs. Ludlam?"

The lunch was a vast success, what with sheep's-head, crabs, terrapin eggs, and the fruit they had brought with them. Olivia's gratitude was such that she declared none but Uncle John should row her home; and what she did not learn on the way as to boobies, terrapin, crabs, and Jerseymen were little worth the seeking. He had the talk to himself, and Olivia was glad to be silent.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest nature's rule."

THE little party collected at the inn door towards sunset, after a walk up from the boats. Olivia was tired, and went up-stairs at once to see Mrs. Wynne. Mr. Pennell had heard from Uncle John of an old timepiece in the village, and turned to go down the street with Leslie to see it. As the latter passed Blake, he said, —

"Colonel, the man I told you about is gittin' his supper inside. Thought you might want to see him."

"Thanks," said Blake, and, taking Francis quietly aside, he said, —

"Phil, walk up the road with me; I want to talk to you a moment."

"All right," returned the other; and they strolled away.

"Now, what is it, Roland?"

"That man Darnell is here in the same house with us."

"And what then? I shall eat my terrapin all the same."

"He is a cousin of Miss Wynne's."

"Well?"

"He is a scoundrel. No matter how I know

it. Let it suffice that I say so. He is capable of every crime."

"And how does that concern you or me, Roland? We are not detectives."

"You see what kind of people the Wynnes are. Here are two gentlewomen to whom he comes as an unquestioned relative: at least I suppose so. They may know all about him, and they may know nothing. What is my duty in the matter? To give a friend half knowledge and then to ask whole advice does not seem reasonable, and yet that is the situation, Phil."

"It 's a little awkward. Could n't you talk to Mr. Pennell? he seems a nice kind of man. I fancy that he is an old friend of theirs."

"I have thought of that; but suppose that I can only say to him what I have said to you, and no more: what then? I can't talk to the women."

"No, — clearly not. It seems to me that it is narrowed down to a little conversation with Darnell. Of course I am at your service if he makes a row."

"Oh, there will be no duelling nonsense, Phil. I should as soon think of a duel with a rattlesnake. I must talk to him alone."

"I don't altogether like these talks without a witness; but I suppose you know best. What do you fear?"

"Anything, — everything. The man may intend no evil here, — God knows, — but as surely as I am myself a man I do not mean that he shall

have a chance. I shall not act hastily, — of that you may be sure; nor shall I speak until I am certain what I mean to do in case my tongue does not suffice. If I knew that he had any definite mischief in his head, I should be better prepared to deal with him. I want you to keep an eye on him. Between us he cannot have much opportunity."

"All right, old man. It strikes me as a little absurd, though."

"No matter. I have made up my mind. Now let 's go in to supper. Absurdity may be instinctive wisdom, Phil. A man who does not respect his own individuality of opinion is like" —

"A turkey-gobbler in a hail-storm," broke in his friend.

Blake laughed. "Indeed, Phil, I was enough in doubt to need assistance. Do you think there is any question on earth that you could not answer?"

"I might imagine one or two. All questions are answerable. Infinity of un-response is inconceivable. The æon shall reply to the riddle of the hour. Divinity alone is incomprehensible. Surely, therefore, the more incomprehensible I am, the more am I divine."

"Oh, Phil, Phil, you are outrageous! Are you ever serious?"

"Yes; I was once, for a minute, when I heard a man of Concord declare that 'somewhere in the Infinite there is an eternal teapot.' That made me thoughtful: it did, indeed."

"I am not surprised," said Blake, laughing.

"It 's a comfort now and then, Roland, to make you want to anchor or blow that fog-horn."

"Thanks. I shall owe you one. I see my own feather on the fatal dart."

"Well, here we are. I rather want to see you meet Mr. Darnell. As a student of human nature, it interests me."

"Hush, Phil! There he is."

As he spoke, Darnell, who was standing in the doorway, came forward, smiling. His movements were easy, and even graceful like those of his sister, and in the high carriage of his head and the forward set of the chin there was some faint suggestion of self-esteem.

"Good-evening, Mr. Francis," he said. "I am glad to meet you again;" and then, turning to Blake, "we are older acquaintances, major. I owe you a heavy debt. It is hardly my fault that it has been so long unacknowledged in person. I wrote to you twice from Fort Delaware, but presume my letters did not reach you. However, it is not too late to say now what I feel." As he began to speak, he put out his hand, which Blake reluctantly took.

"The service was a small one, Mr. Darnell. Suppose we say no more about it."

"That will not lessen the debt for me; and perhaps my turn may come some day. I can't but feel very glad of the chance of knowing you better; and you are going to be here for some time, I trust."

"I am a little uncertain as to my stay. It depends on circumstances."

"Well, the longer the better. I am a ruined Confederate, and have nothing on earth to do. I am waiting for something to turn up," he added, bitterly. "I suppose we rebels are not very acceptable at the North just now."

"Oh, nobody cares much," said Francis, — "certainly the army men least of all. Have a cigar? There does n't seem much to do here but smoke."

"I suppose one can find a horse to ride; and, after all, there are cards. A light, please." And then Francis and the Confederate fell into talk of shooting, while Blake excused himself and strolled away down the street.

He wanted to be alone. The feeling uppermost in his mind was horror at the neighborhood of this man to Olivia Wynne. He felt that he must be careful. Something in the physical beauty of Darnell also touched strange chords in the young man's heart and surprised his consciousness with a sense of pity that a man so well bred and so gentle of speech should be so base. He was haunted also, in some faint degree, by that idea so often dwelt upon in romance, that he was measurably responsible for the life which he had lengthened. He smiled at the thought, but it intensified the sadness with which he reflected on his own duty.

Then he put it all aside, and turned to gentler

dreams. He had done that in the morning which he had not meant to do; but he could see now that it was inevitable. Self-forgiveness became easy as he reflected that she had shown only sweet confusion and not anger. He wandered on far into the sombre pine woods; and when he came back, although it was not very late, it was to find only one candle on the entry table beside the matches.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"She carries a white angel in her breast,
That none can conquer ; and all falsities
Before these two bright seraphs of her eyes
Turn to their native dust ; a shame-clad cheek
Is stronger than a sword to guard the weak."

BLAKE breakfasted early, and was off for a bath and a pull on the thoroughfare, whilst one by one the rest came down. As far as being merry was concerned, they were better without him ; and he had good reasons for temporary absence. Francis found Mr. Darnell amusing, and Pennell, having bought his clock, was serenely happy, especially as he had succeeded in getting it for less than it was worth. As they rose to greet Miss Wynne, Francis was struck with the ease of Darnell's manner, and, as he spoke, with the soft inflections of his Southern tongue. He had seen his cousin Miss Wynne for but a few minutes the night before. She told him now that Mrs. Wynne would be glad to see him after twelve, and asked tranquilly for Octopia.

Darnell was a little surprised at her calmness. She seemed to him more of a self-assured woman and less of a girl. He noticed also that she looked at the door now and then, and presently saw a little flush and a slight stir in her face. He sat with

his back to the windows, and could not see what it was; but, as she looked steadily down at her plate, Blake came in, having had his spin in a boat and a cool plunge in the salt water.

Towards noon Blake saw her at some distance, walking over the meadows with Darnell at her side. That was natural enough; but the young fellow set his teeth as he watched them. They were a long distance off, and the man was carrying her sketching-chair.

Blake turned away, resolute to end the business as soon as possible. For a while only duty had urged him on; now there was something else which strengthened resolve.

Olivia had a pretty distinct will to-day to avoid Roland Blake. When the men were having their after-breakfast cigars beneath the willows, she read awhile to Mrs. Wynne, and, pleading fatigue, escaped with her drawing-materials by the back garden, went around through the pine woods, and walking swiftly across the low land was soon at her ease. Presently she heard her name, and, turning, saw Richard Darnell.

"I thought you were with grandmamma," she said. She had no reason to fear him, but she wished him away.

"Oh, I merely went in to tell her good-morning; and when I found you had gone to the meadows, as her maid said, I thought I would follow you. Let me take your camp-stool. I should like to see you sketch."

"Very well," she said, and walked on, answering his questions as to the coast and the people.

He was bent on making her feel at ease, and before they reached the landing he had succeeded, so that she began to hope he would not recur to the subject of their last interview in New York.

A brief time there had been when, as she remembered, she had come dangerously near to liking him well. Now she read his wooing in the clear frank light a nobler nature had cast upon her life. If he spoke again, as she feared he might, she would be very gentle; that was all.

"Where are you going?" he said, as she got into the single boat at the landing-slip.

"I shall wait for Uncle John. I sent word to him to meet me; but he has failed me, I fear."

"Let me row you."

She hesitated. She disliked to say no without a reason, and even more to say yes.

"Come, Olive," he said, "let me be your boatman. I shall be here only a day or two, and then I shall go home to Virginia. You need not be afraid," he added, seeing her reluctance.

"Oh, I am not afraid," she said, proudly. "Why should I be afraid? I suppose you can row?"

"I? Of course."

She got in without more words, and he pushed off.

"I want to go around that point. Then the first turn to the left, and you row up a little creek to the right. There is an old wreck I want to sketch."

She was silent for ten minutes, busily retouching an old drawing; meanwhile he rowed on absently, wrapt in passionate study of her face. Presently she looked up. "You are wrong, Cousin Richard. I should have watched our course."

He turned the boat back, and took another crossing creek. She stood up and looked. They were in the hopeless mazes of a hundred waterways. She could see only grass and the mainland woods.

"It is very provoking," she said.

At last he urged that she should let him try to find their way back, but in ten minutes more he had to confess failure: one creek was like another, and they all seemed crooked past belief.

"Upon my word, I am sorry, Olive."

"That won't help us," she said, intensely annoyed. "I suppose some one will come; but we may be here all day."

Meanwhile, the boat lay adrift in the outgoing tide. Olivia thought of her former scrape, and laughed a little nervously. "It is so absurd," she said.

Then she concluded that she would sketch, — she might as well do something, — and would he fasten the boat to the bank? This was not easy to do, as there was no anchor, and he could only hold on by the grasses for a time, until they broke in his hands.

They had started quite late, and an hour or two had gone by. It was after noon. She had told

Darnell he must not talk while she was sketching. Therefore he sat and watched her, gnawing his moustache, not saying a word, accepting the joy of merely seeing her. He only knew that the girl in one end of the boat was a presence which filled him with a sense of womanly competence of face and form. When the winds petted her as they went by and she put up her pencil absently to push back a lock of hair they had displaced, the prettiness of the movement did not capture his attention.

He was capable of volcanic explosions. His worst had been the result of abrupt temptation backed by urgent needs or desires when the devil's recruiting-sergeant, Opportunity, had offered some lure of gain or passion. It is a sad fact that purity attracts the impure. The temperate maidenliness of this girl's acts and talk, her outbreaks of joy or pleasure not yet free from childhood's intensity of enjoyment of simple things, he liked, and not less the flowing curves of her strong and well-knit figure.

His failure to win her had made him angry, — the sign of a low nature, — but he had place only for the sway of one passion at a time, and the anxieties arising out of the stock market had filled his mind for a while as they could not have done had he continued to see her. His was no spiritualized love, — he was not capable of that, — but it was just now as true an affection as his organization made possible. It must be indeed a poor

sham of love which does not lift a man above his worst level. This glimpse of heaven gentles us all.

At last he said, "It is well I am not a woman, Cousin Olive, or I might not have been so easy to keep quiet."

"But I have been equally able to restrain my tongue. You may talk now: I can't sketch: the boat rocks too much. I was thinking we might let her drift out with the tide: it may take us into the main thoroughfare. If we stay here we shall be left aground, and no one will ever see us."

"All right," he said, and pushed the bateau into mid-stream. He, at least, was satisfied.

Presently, as he went on rowing with the tide, they came into a broader creek, and at last, as Olivia had predicted, into the main thoroughfare. Then she saw, to her dismay, that the great beach was not far off, and how utterly they had lost themselves.

"Is n't that an inlet?" he said.

"Yes, and the tide sets towards it. You must pull to the beach: there is a house there, and some people. They will take us back. I can't think how I could have been so foolish; and now grandmamma will be awfully frightened."

"I doubt, really, Olive, if she will trouble herself."

"But please pull a little harder. It is past four o'clock."

Presently he urged the boat well up on the

shore, and they began to walk to the house. She was worried, annoyed, self-reproachful; he was the slave of the hour's joy. They said little. Then while he waited outside she went in at the open door, saying that she would find Mrs. Hand, but in a few moments came back and said there was no one in the house, and, as they had seen no boat at the slip, every one must be away.

"The worst of it is," she added, "they very often go to stay all night at the Court-house."

"Then we are Robinson Crusoes, Olive!" And he was selfishly pleased that for hours he should be alone with her.

Her trouble at the distress her absence would cause did not move him greatly. However, to quiet her, he said he would take a look among the dunes. He came back in a half hour, and reported that he could find no one; that the people had left the fire covered with ashes, and that this would not have been the case had they meant to remain away all night. At last he persuaded her to walk a little, and was sure that pretty soon some one would come.

But before long she became so evidently disturbed and so unwilling or unable to talk that he said he would take the boat and try to find his way home, so that some one could be sent to her.

She replied that it was useless, — that he would never find his way.

Then they endeavored to call a boat passing up the thoroughfare, but did not succeed in attracting the attention of its crew.

By and by he said, suddenly, as they stood in front of the house, —

"What made you run away, Olive? Was I so very dreadful?"

"No; you were always kind to me. I persuaded grandmamma to go, and it was I who asked Mr. Pennell not to say where we had gone. It was a little silly, I dare say; but, Cousin Richard, Octopia had simply worn me out. I wanted some relief. No doubt I was selfish; but between Octopia and grandmamma I was — well, I merely could not bear it any longer. I suppose even men get desperate sometimes."

"Then it was not, Olive, that you wanted to fly from me. When we learned where you were, I wrote to you; but you did not answer."

"No, I did not answer. I had nothing to say," she returned, coldly.

"Yet it was all of a man's life you had in your hands."

"Men's lives are in their own hands, Richard."

"By heaven, no!" he said. "I was a spoilt boy, — told every day how beautiful I was. I had a dozen servants to do what I wished. No one refused me any indulgence. I grew up half educated, among slaves and women who thought my recklessness a thing to admire. Had I been a coward it would have been better. I spent money, — my own and what my mother gave me. Then she died, and things went from bad to worse."

He paused. It was part natural self-defense

and part an eager desire to enlist the sympathy of the woman at his side.

His arrow went wide of the mark. She knew well what it all led up to, but was angry that he had so little tact or good feeling as to seize on this awkward time to urge his suit. She glanced wistfully over the deserted thoroughfare.

Darnell went on: "How can you say a man's life is in his own hands? My mother was like Octopia. She indulged her own nervous system and her children. I grew up with a taste for luxury and found that we were poor, and then we lived along, — God knows how, — until the war came."

"I should like to help you," said Olivia. "But what can I do?"

The false note in all he said was ever disturbingly present to her instinctive sense of moral harmony.

"My God! can't you see," he answered, passionately, "that it is the cry of a soul in hell, Olive? Help me with your love. To-day my life is in your hands, to make or mar. Love like mine must win."

She was scared at his vehemence, and looked aside at his flushed, handsome face with a certain vague anxiety.

Then he paused before her: "Have you no answer? you are cruel!"

"I am not cruel," said Olivia. "I do not see why you talk to me in this strange way. You know that I can have but one answer."

"And that?" he inquired, sternly; "and that? What is it?"

"I do not love you."

"Then good-by, love," he said, hoarsely, and caught her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

"My God!" she exclaimed, struggling, and pushing him off with her strong young arms.

"Forgive me," said he. "Forgive me, Olive."

"Then let me go," she cried.

"And you do forgive me?" he said, releasing her.

"I will try," she said, faintly, feeling that her strength was leaving her.

"And there is no one else, Olive? I — I thought once you might care for me."

"I will not be questioned," she returned, proudly. "You are cruel and unmanly."

"Then there is some one, and I have lost you! It did seem to me once that you might come to love me. No man shall come between us. No man shall dare to take you from me. I would kill him. As I live I would kill him."

The girl recoiled; there was awful earnestness in the threat.

"Fool!" she said, "are you mad? He saved your life."

"What, Olive! not Major Blake? Curse him, he is safe from me! Please don't cry. You have saved a man's life. Upon my honor I am speaking the truth."

The girl was sobbing bitterly, a tempest of fear and shame and loathing and surprised love in her breast. "Go! go!" she said; "you have done your worst," and motioned him away with outstretched palm.

Then, as he moved from her side, she called to him. He paused.

"You won't say what I have told you?"

He understood her in some measure. "You shall be obeyed. I am not an utter brute. Can I do anything else, Olive?" He spoke now with his usual gentleness.

"If — if you would go up to the house-top and look and see if any one is in sight."

"Certainly," he said, and, walking away, disappeared in the house.

She waited a moment, looked about her, and then, gathering her skirts, ran like a deer to the boat, and with difficulty shoved it into the water. Then she got in, and with an oar pushed it out resolutely into the sunset-lighted thoroughfare, and awkwardly rowed away.

A few moments later she saw Darnell on the shore. A sense of freedom gave her courage, and something had forbidden her to remain alone with him on the dusking beach.

"Olive! Olive!" he cried. "You will be lost! Keep off from the inlet, — to the left, to the left!"

She did not reply, but pulled sturdily out on to the thoroughfare, with fierce scorn of his advice

and a sense of deliverance in her praying soul. She had the sense to direct her course towards the setting sun, but found it hard to pull against the strong flow of the ebb tide.

By degrees the figure of the man grew indistinct, the dusk grew in about her, and, quite exhausted, she ceased to row, until the low headlands, dimly visible, began to seem to go by her westward, as the strong flow of the water swept her boat towards the inlet. Then she grew uneasy, and rowed hard again, so that her palms became blistered from this unaccustomed labor.

And now the sun went down, and the brief September twilight faded into night, and she was cold, having let fall her cloak in her flight. At intervals she tugged at the oars, trying to see the village lights. At last she gave up and sat still, utterly worn out.

A half hour went by. The terror of the black water below and the star-lit dome above began to possess her soul with an awful sense of isolation. Would she drift out to death in the wild wash of the inlet breakers? They seemed to be nearer. And life was rich to her just now. And Roland Blake, — why did he not come? Would not love guide him like the birds? Ah, if it would but be he who should find her!

She tried again to row, hearing too well the roar of the lion-like rollers as they ravened at the inlet mouth. Again she gave up. It was useless to struggle.

She recalled how sometimes when she had been worried at home she used to find that to sit at the piano and sing steadied her. She broke out in the hymn, "Abide with me; fast falls the eventide," her voice at first trembling, but soon clear and resolute. She thought, smiling, as she heard the wild breakers ramping on the bar perilously closer and closer, that she was like the Christian maids who sang hymns in the cruel arena.

The unguided boat was rocking dangerously. She paused. The night was black all around her. Of a sudden came hope; far away she saw a flash, and then heard the report of a pistol. She called aloud, and, seizing the oars, pulled hard towards the flash she had seen. A second shot helped her. In some ten minutes she was safe. Uncle John and Blake were beside her, and she was carefully helped into their boat, to which they tied her own little craft.

They said little until she was securely seated. Then Uncle John spoke: "Well, you are a sure 'nough mariner now, Miss 'Livia. And how did it come?"

"I went out with my cousin, and we got lost."

"An' where on airth is that man?"

"We got down to the beach, and I happened to get into the boat while he was at the house."

"Drifted off, like. Wa'al, he might be in a wus place. Guess he 'll bide. You might be coolish, miss?"

"Yes; I am cold. It does n't matter."

Blake took off his coat. "Put this over you," he said, and went on pulling.

"No," she replied; "I cannot."

"Do as you are told," he said, curtly.

She put it about her, liking well to be commanded. It was an old army undress coat. As she fastened it about her, one of the well-used buttons came off in her hand. She laughed, and put it in her bosom.

"What 's amusin' you, miss?" said Uncle John.

"Nothing. I am only happy."

"Well, you 've had a nigh thing of it. Them rollers is rather rampagin'."

Then they pulled with no more words said.

At the landing Blake walked away with her.

"Take my arm," he said. "The bank is full of holes." She obeyed him silently. "Miss Wynne," he added, gravely, "something has happened. What is it?"

"I cannot tell you. You asked me to trust you yesterday. Now it is my turn. You will oblige me if you do not ask. It is not serious. Will you be so kind as to meet Mr. Darnell just as usual? He is greatly to be pitied."

"And you are sure that you are acting wisely?"

"Yes, I am very sure."

"Then that is enough. I will see that you are not questioned."

"You are very good to me."

"That is as if you should say I am good to myself."

She asked abruptly if her grandmother had been troubled, and was surprised that the old lady had not been more disturbed.

Blake could not help telling his companion of Pennell's extreme distress when after dinner Miss Wynne had been found missing and the boat gone from the slip. "I think he has half the town in his pay. About four o'clock he began to understand that Mr. Darnell must be with you. That seemed to quiet Mrs. Wynne, but it made Mr. Pennell twice as restless; I could see that. I am afraid Mr. Pennell does not fancy Mr. Darnell, or else he had some anxiety about him. I could see that there was something."

Olivia smiled as they moved cautiously along the bank in the darkness. "Perhaps I can explain. Addenda Pennell has for years had a great admiration for my cousin, Miss Darnell. It was rather amusing. Really she made him fetch and carry like a well-trained poodle. I used to think it was a shame."

"I see," said Blake, thoughtfully.

After a pause he turned the current of their talk. "We heard you singing. What was it you sang?"

She told him.

"And what made you think of singing?"

"One's own voice seems like another person. It made me feel less alone. It kept me from thinking. One gets such strange thoughts."

"Yes; at times I have felt so out on the picket-

line. There death seemed always near in the stillness and the night: you can understand that. And here is the house. This way, Miss Wynne."

He led her round by the garden to the back gate, took his coat, and saying simply, "Good-night," left her.

In front of the inn he found Pennell and Francis, to whom he explained the adventure with such audacity of comment as did credit to his powers as a master of fiction, so that they both agreed with him that Darnell must have been very careless about the boat, and that, on the whole, the less said about the matter the better.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Time is a cruel creditor: he saith, What didst thou with this minute and with that?"

RICHARD DARNELL returned early in the morning, having been brought over by a fisherman, who told him of Miss Wynne's safety. He dressed, breakfasted before any one came down, and walked sullenly away up the main road, with no company but a cigar and his own reflections. They were not consoling.

His anxiety about Olivia had been horrible as he saw her float out into the dusk. He passed a night of torture. When he learned that she had been comfortably in bed he began to regain his sullen wrath at her refusal of his love. Minor motives, too, pricked him like nettles: they are like mischievous boys in a mob, and make half the trouble. His self-esteem was hurt, his money almost exhausted; indeed, he had borrowed from Pennell a small sum, readily lent. No one had cared even to send over to the beach for him. In his bitter mood Francis's gayety annoyed him. And it was clear, too, that the man who had taken his place in Olive's heart haughtily avoided him, and yet had saved his life. Better had he been left to die. Was it not a clear settlement? — a

heart for a life? The logic of despair was in his mind. He owed this man nothing.

It was raining heavily. He did not notice it, but threw away his cigar and strode along, champing at the black moustache which hid his lip-lines. Having never been taught self-control or mental discipline, his consciousness was now like a madhouse in which the mutinous insane range unchecked without a keeper. At such moments crime is in the air, murder at the elbow. He took out of his pocket a photograph of Olivia and stared at it. The cool maidenly purity, the white dress and innocent face, but fed his rage. He kissed it, and, tearing it to pieces, threw it into the thicket at his side with a muttered oath.

As he turned, looking up he saw Roland Blake coming quietly along the road. The young man had passed a night of unrest, thinking over what Olivia had told him. The very guarded nature of what she had told him made him anxious, and at last he had said to himself that he would do something which should drive this man away. He had waited too long as it was, and would wait no longer.

Learning that Darnell had gone up the road, he followed him, naturally enough reflecting as to what he should say. He had promised Olivia to think as kindly as possible of this man, for whom she had expressed pity. He would do his best. He overtook the Confederate in the pine woods.

"Good-morning," he said.

"Good-morning."

"I have followed you to-day that I might talk with you. I have something to say to you which I have put off for various reasons. It is not a pleasant thing to do, but it has to be done."

"I am not in a mood for talk. I advise you to postpone it."

"That I cannot do. You will have to hear me."

"I am not in the habit of allowing men to dictate to me, Mr. Blake." He was sobering fast under a sense of the approach of some crisis, and had relief in the possibility of action.

"I am not much afraid of consequences," said Blake, "nor do I want to say what may be disagreeable."

"Oh, very well. Go on. What is it? Let us sit down, if you please. I am tired." He was now serenely tranquil.

They sat on a fallen tree, while Darnell calmly lit a cigar, the rain still falling drearily.

"Let me ask you," said Blake, "to hear me patiently. What I have to ask of you I want to ask as a favor to a man who has done you, whether willingly or not, the small kindness of saving your life."

"Well," said Darnell, in profound amazement, "there are few things a man ought not to be willing to promise a gentleman who reminds him of such indebtedness. Pray go on."

"I shall consider your debt canceled, if you

will go away from this place and cease to make any further effort to see your cousins. If I seem to you absurd or exacting, or, if you like, insane, be so good as to remember that I have reasons which I do not wish to state, — reasons which involve your own safety. Do not force me to state them. I have, I assure you on my honor, a real desire to deal with you kindly; and yet" —

Darnell laughed outright. "Well, of all the cool things I ever heard of, this is the coolest. You are not quite insane, I presume? And I am to go away to oblige you, who are in love with my cousin! It is n't a joke, is it?"

"There is no question of Miss Wynne at present. We will leave her out of the case, if you please. I have chosen, quixotically perhaps, to put it as a favor to me. You can have no strong reason for remaining; and if you say yes I shall be saved — and you will escape — what I earnestly desire to avoid."

Darnell turned sharply. "First I wish to say to you, Mr. Blake, that no possible obligation can justify your words. If I have permitted them at all, it is because I do owe you my life. As to your proposal, it is simply nonsense; and as for your rather enigmatical threats, I must now ask you to explain them. This matter has gone far enough. What do you mean?" He rose as he ended, and stood facing the younger man.

"I made a promise, Mr. Darnell, that I would treat you kindly in this matter. I have kept my

word. I have no hostility to you, and, for many reasons, I pity you."

It was true. He did pity him, — more, indeed, than Darnell could have dreamed.

"By heavens, sir, you must consider me a patient man."

"And you will not go?"

"I? no!"

Despite his unusual capacity for self-control, Blake lost his temper. "Then you must. If you will have it, take it. I am the officer who met you on that night in May, when you gave me certain information and were paid by me for it on the spot. Your bullet wounded me, and I escaped. You are a double traitor, — to your cause and to the man who by after-chance saved your worthless life. Do you suppose that I am going to allow you to live in the same house with two helpless women? There you have my story. What do you propose to do?" He rose as he finished.

As Blake spoke, Darnell recoiled, his face a livid mask, his jaw dropped. He was ruined. The one thing he yet valued — the opinion of men of his own caste — was lost. He said no words, but his hand crept tremulously towards his breast-pocket.

Blake was on him in a second, and caught his groping arm at the wrist. Darnell struck him wildly with his free hand as the young man, closing, tripped him with his right leg, and they fell heavily to the ground. For a moment the strife

was doubtful; but Blake held fast the dangerous right hand, and fastening with a clutch of despair on Darnell's throat, disregarded the blows of his unfettered arm. The face beneath him he never forgot in after days. The strong knee on the chest and the fierce grip at the throat did their work swiftly. The man's arm relaxed, a convulsive movement went over his features, and Blake rose tottering to his feet. Francis was at his side.

"By George, Phil," exclaimed his friend, breathing hard, "I am glad to see you. I am afraid I have killed this scoundrel."

Francis knelt down beside the prostrate man. "No," he said, looking up; "he is breathing. The color is coming back into his face. He is only a scotched snake. Are you hurt? Your face is n't pretty; but it is n't very bad. What on earth shall we do, Blake?"

"Wait a little. If he comes to, as he seems to be doing, I must talk to him. By the way, just put your hand in his breast-pocket; I think you will find a revolver."

Darnell was moving uneasily, and opened his eyes as Francis sought for the weapon. "There is none, Roland," said Francis, looking up.

"Indeed? I might have escaped this row, but he put his hand in his breast, and I did not wait. I suppose the act was mere habit on his part. But how did you come here, Phil?"

"I followed you through the wood. I hardly know why, but I feared something after our late talk."

Darnell was now seated, a wretched figure smirched with mud, his face still livid and blotched. They stood quietly watching him. He stared about him, bewildered.

At length Blake spoke. "Are you better?"

Darnell swept a hand over his face. "Yes, I 'm better." Then rapidly reviving, he rose with Blake's help and stood uncertain and pallid, looking curiously from one to the other.

Blake turned to Francis. "Just drop out of earshot a moment, old fellow; I must talk to this man."

Francis shrugged his shoulders. "Exit," he said, "at left side of stage," and walked into the wood.

"Can you understand me, Mr. Darnell?"

"Yes; I remember now. I wish I had killed you."

"Well, you have not. Can you recall what I said to you?"

"Yes."

"And will you leave this place if I promise to tell no one of what I know? You are safe with me, if you simply go away and see your cousins no more."

"And if I do not, what then?"

Blake's face set hard.

"As there is a God above me, I will tell Olivia Wynne."

"I will go."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Remember, I shall keep my word, and ruthlessly. If I have to tell the whole world, I shall do it."

"You have said enough."

As Darnell spoke he moved towards the Court-house, at first slowly, but soon with a more assured step. Blake watched him a moment, and then calling Francis, they turned into the wood and walked around homewards by the meadows.

"You had a near thing of it, Roland."

"Yes. Don't talk to me. I am played out, body and mind."

"All right. I am not in that gentleman's secrets, but I suppose, from my brief acquaintance with him, that he is what people describe as his own worst foe."

"He is to be pitied, Phil."

"Well, I don't know. He is probably engaged just now in the easy Christian task of forgiving his enemy."

"How can you jest about it?"

"And pray what else can one do?"

"Do nothing, say nothing."

"My dear Roland, your charity is all very fine in theory, and yet you half killed him. But frankly, Roland, is there any practical result? I hate rows between gentlemen, but most of all those which end by leaving things as they were."

"This has not left things as they were. I have done what I wanted to do, but I ought to have

kept my temper. If I had been a trifle less quick there would have been no row."

"Well! it 's done now. Will there be anything further?"

"Hardly, if you mean anything like a duel. That, in this case, is simply impossible."

"One word more, Roland. I suppose you may be said to have had a fall."

"Yes. It is true."

CHAPTER XXX.

"Will the springtime let thee guess
All of summer's loveliness?
Canst thou from the rosebud know
Half how sweet the rose will grow?"

ADDENDA PENNELL was troubled about Darnell. He had seen him depleting his sister's small capital, and lately he had himself lent him money. At one time he meant to offer him a place in his office; but he had seen how incapable he was of accuracy, and simply feared to put money-temptation in the way of a man who could coldly beggar a sister. He had aided many men in trouble, but this man puzzled his capacity. Yet for Octopia's sake he would do much.

He watched Darnell enter the inn, and, seeing his disordered dress and blotched face, concluded with surprise and regret that he had been drinking. He had not liked the adventure with Olivia, who had not been down at breakfast, but who was said, as he learned on inquiry, to be well, but tired.

When Blake passed him and laughingly explained that he had had a fall, Pennell began to be suspicious. He thought it over a little, wondered if his house-maid had kept his clocks wound up, and slowly wandered down the sandy road.

He had half a mind to telegraph Miss Darnell to come; Mrs. Wynne would not regret it, and Olivia seemed to him to have grown more amiable as regarded her cousin.

At the post-office he found a letter from Octopia, in which she said that she was anxious as to many things, and had resolved to go to the Court-house, and would he see about rooms and have a fire and give orders as to the bed? And perhaps till she came there was no need to tell her cousins. This he liked least; but he nevertheless obeyed her as usual.

In the afternoon Blake sent up a note to Miss Wynne to ask if she would walk with him before the supper-hour.

He found her, near the sunset time, in the small parlor, and together they turned off toward the sea, across the meadows. In the lowering light the great levels were beautiful with hazy breadths of modest colors hard to name. Fading sedge and autumnal ferns, rigid salt grasses and the broadening rings of salt-wort, with light of sun-touched pools, set about with cat-tail and reeds, lent each their hues to make one vast mottled mistiness of browns and reds and intense lake and yellows, of which only autumn knows the trick, — a confusion of blended tints like the strange splendor of a vast palette on which the great artist about to die had left the lavish wealth of unused colors.

"I tried to paint it last week," she said, "and became bankrupt of paints; I mixed them to no

purpose. These tints are like phantoms; they change and come and go, and a breath of wind on the grass and ferns is like the shaking of a kaleidoscope. I gave up in despair. Even if one could paint this maze of color, the sentiment would escape; and that is the thing one really craves."

"And just what is the sentiment of our early autumn?" he said. "It is not sadness, — or not for me, at least. It is a reflective time. One gets nearer to one's self."

Miss Wynne smiled. She was getting accustomed to his occasional outbreaks of slightly hazy speculative speech. He had a liking to set her little puzzles, and delighted in her intelligent dealing with them, or her easy way of disregarding them.

"Oh, I am always near enough to myself," she returned. "The thing is to get nearer to other people." Blake mentally agreed with her, and she continued, hastily, "Now, I have lived years with grandmamma and Octopia, and I am no nearer to understanding them than at first."

"I am sure you know them better than you think you do. Your real trouble is in stating your comprehension in words."

"That may be it."

"Words are so stupid. The great word-artists must gnash their teeth over them. Some day there will be a man who will be able to express what he wants to say equally well with brush and words. Think, now, — if Shakespeare could have also painted Viola and the Jew!"

"But I can always see his people. Listen to the wind in the pines."

"It is like a drowsy waterfall," he said. "And how plainly you can hear the surf!" Olivia shuddered at the memory of it.

Then they came to the landing-slip.

"Perhaps," he said, "you would rather not go out in a boat this evening."

"I should very much rather not. I dreamed of boats and breakers all night long."

"Then we will walk."

"No; I am so much afraid that I mean to go, if you will kindly take me a little way. I have no patience with nervousness."

Liking well the show of character, he returned, "Well, we will use the big bateau, and not go far."

Then they pushed out and he pulled to the north, and came forth on the great wide thoroughfare as the sun had nearly fallen and a fan of opal rays grew broadening up the western sky.

She turned and looked at him. "You have hurt your face, I see."

"Yes. I had a fall."

"You have had a trouble with Richard," she cried, instantly.

How did she know it? How do women know anything? She could not have told you.

"Well, I 'm like G. Washington," he said, laughing. "It is true. Of course I did not mean to tell you. What I do want to say is that

Mr. Darnell will leave to-morrow, and that — and this is my point — if you are, as I am sure you are, a wise woman, you will avoid him for the next twenty-four hours. He is not a nice man, and I think him even a dangerous one."

"Thank you very much," she said, wondering.

Then they drifted out on to the wider space of the wind-fretted water aglow with shimmering lights. He threw a coat in the bottom of the boat, and sat down, the woman on the seat above him.

"I have been unspeakably happy, Miss Wynne, these three or four weeks. The war is over, and this is the pleasant turn for me towards a new life of hopeful work."

"It cannot have been more tranquilly peaceful for any one than for me," she returned. "You may suppose me to have had a life of just a girl's commonplace days; but it is not so. Never in years until this month have I known what it was to control my own hours and tasks. I have lived with two sick women."

"It must have been hard: I can see that."

She now knew this man so trustfully well that she talked to him with a frank innocence which at times gave her little shocks of surprise. She was on the point of telling him of the mysterious secret which had been to her so grave a trouble.

"Besides" — she said, and paused.

"Besides — what?"

"Oh, nothing. I was only thinking of an annoyance in my life at home."

"Let it annoy me too."

"No. Why should I burden any one else?"

"Burden me!" he said. "What burden is there you could lay on me that I would not gladly carry?" She looked past him over the dusking water, and he went on, still gazing steadily up at the pensive sweetness of her lifted face: "Don't you know that I love you, Olivia?" And the soft vowels slid lingering over his lips.

The girl covered her face with both hands, and murmured a brief prayer in the seclusion of the little chapel her white fingers made.

"Shall it be so, Olive? Shall we go through life, by God's grace, hand in hand, helpful of each other, till our days are done?"

"Yes." And, bending over as she spoke, she frankly put her hand in his.

"Thank you," he said, very earnestly. "How can I ever thank you? How sweet you are, Olive! God's gold is in your hair." It was shot through with sunset spikes of yellow light.

Life was too full for her to trust her lips with speech. At last she said, timidly, "Don't you think we should go home — Roland?"

Then he took the oars, and, pulling slowly, reached the bank, while the night-hawks wheeled swooping over them under the deepening blue of the star-lit dome.

They landed and walked hand in hand across the well-known meadow as little children, because they had entered the kingdom of heaven which is

love; but when they were yet some distance from the inn, in the darkness, and heard voices on the porch, she felt of a sudden the hot blood in her cheeks, and pausing, said, "Good-by."

Then, facing her, he took her hands and kissed her.

"Oh, Roland!" she cried, and stood still a moment, and then was away through the darkness like a deer, and was glad of its covert. He stayed where she had left him, and watched the white flutter of her gown until it disappeared.

At the side-gate of the garden she lingered with her hand on the latch. "I love him," she murmured. "Thank God for this day!"

If there be no touch of religion for a young girl in the first kiss of the man she worthily loves, life must have been for her a meaner thing than one could wish.

Blake moved slowly up to the porch, where were Pennell and Francis chatting, and, farther away, under the willows, Darnell pacing sullenly to and fro.

Now here was Blake with the wine of life's utmost joy in his veins, and here were Francis, — light comedy, — his chair atilt, and Pennell, his life a hidden melodrama, and under the willows Darnell as imminent tragedy.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"A life of nothings, — nothing worth,
From that first nothing ere our birth
To that last nothing under earth.
Suffice it thee
Thy pain is a reality."

THE surgeon's idea of "shock" as a result of sudden physical injury should be imported into the domain of criminal psychology. The ball which crushes a joint stops or weakens the distant heart, or palsies a remote limb, or enfeebles the whole frame. In the sphere of mind and morale the abrupt shock of fear or shame may in like manner affect distant nerve-cells and thus deaden memory, palsy the organs of reason, annihilate for a while the power to love or hate, and even reduce a man for a time to the verge of inert idiocy.

Under such a blow, emphasized in its force by bodily hurt, Darnell found himself all day incapable of thought, stupid and indifferent. Now and then his head cleared, and he wondered at his want of anger or his total lack of motive.

When he rose next morning, he was more nearly himself again. He was conscious that he was not quite well either in body or in mind; but a brisk walk and a little brandy helped him, so

that he went coolly in to breakfast and sat down, saying, —

"Good-morning, Olivia. I hope you are over the effects of your voyage." Every one looked up except Blake, and Francis, nodding, eyed the man with curiosity.

Then Pennell, who sat near, told him that Miss Octopia would arrive some time in the day.

Darnell glanced at his cousin, and said, "Do you hear that, Olive? Octopia is coming."

"Indeed!" she returned. She did not care now, and half wondered at her own indifference.

The meal went on awkwardly. As Darnell left the table, he said, bending over Olivia's chair, —

"I am going away to-day, and I want to see Cousin Anne to tell her good-by. I shall be at her door at eleven. Please to tell her, will you?"

"I will. But shall you not wait to see Octopia?"

"I do not know," he replied, absently.

"She will be sorry to miss you," said Olivia, forcing herself to kindly speech.

"I shan't miss myself," he muttered absently. "May I see you again before I go?"

"I would rather not," said Olivia, still looking down at her plate, they being now alone, and only Blake walking uneasily to and fro near the door.

"As you like," returned Darnell, and went out.

Then Blake came back, and she told him what had passed. He said to her that the stage went at one, and if she would keep her room until then

she could thus easily avoid Darnell. As to himself, he would stay about until the man departed.

Darnell went up-stairs, packed his valise and took more brandy, and reflected, sitting on the bed. Even his passion for the woman he had insulted was still dulled for the time. Fear, and hatred of Blake, whose word he did not fully trust, were the most distinct sentiments now in his mind. It was dreadful to the wretch to think that a part of his security from exposure would be due to the fact that, loving Olive, Blake would be less willing to disgrace one of her kin.

He had to leave; and Octopia's resources were getting low. What could he do when these quite failed him? He would see Mrs. Wynne and persuade her — and he smiled grimly — to lend him money; and then he wished that his sister had been more free in her confessions to him. Once clear from this awful fear and supplied with money, he would go West and see what chance would bring.

At eleven he went down-stairs, and, knocking gently, entered Mrs. Wynne's room. He was not in a state to notice particulars, or he would have observed — what was visible enough to Olivia — that the old lady was losing ground physically. She was never intellectually remarkable, but her mind did not seem to fail equally with her body, and no change of mind or body lessened her prejudices or altered her habits.

It has been seen that Darnell had been pleasant to her in New York. If Olivia had liked him,

Mrs. Wynne would have tranquilly accepted it as a release from certain unpleasant things which Octopia kept too much before her as motive forces for the perpetuation of gratitude, and which, after such a marriage, would cease to be threatening. Olivia had told her, however, only an hour before, that it was not a possible thing, and that once for all she had done with Richard Darnell. The old lady was now comfortable over this, too, since she would not be forced to give her niece, with a husband, some means of support.

She was pretty and refined in her white wrapper and laces, and, as always, she wore her long gloves and had her Chinese fan and a soft handkerchief on her lap.

"And so you are going away, Richard?" she said, "and Octopia is coming? I did not think we should be at rest very long. How you young people move about! I suppose it 's so easy nowadays. When I was a girl and my father used to come to Congress in Philadelphia, it took us weeks with four horses and a coach, — weeks, Richard."

"They say you were a beauty, Cousin Anne."

The old lady smiled an autumnal smile. "I have had men tell me that. But it 's a long while ago. I think I danced the minuet well."

"I almost think you could now."

"The girls and the men would laugh at it, sir. None but well-bred people could dance it; and now there is no more good breeding; it has gone out."

She paused, and he hesitated. Then he took her thin hand. "Cousin Anne," he said, "we are ruined, all of us, down in Virginia. I too am absolutely penniless. If I had a little money, — a few thousands, — I could start fresh and take Octopia home with me. Don't you think you could lend me four or five thousand dollars?"

"Why don't you ask Octopia? I gave her five thousand dollars, — gave it to her. Where is it? I think it quite enough to give to one family."

"How do I know what she does with her money?"

"Well, I can't do it."

"Then perhaps a less sum, cousin."

"I do not propose to give you anything."

Of Richard Darnell at least she had no fear, and she liked to feel that security of increasing wealth of which age, with its experiences of calamity and loss, is so fond.

"Living is very expensive," she added, "what with Olive and Octopia. Now don't ask me any more."

"It seems very easy," he returned, "to forget obligations."

"To whom am I obliged, Richard Darnell? Certainly not to you."

"To any one," he said, with slow articulation, "who keeps your secrets. If Octopia has seen fit to hide from the world what she knows, I at least may not feel that it is needful to be quite so mer-

ciful to a woman who cares as little as you do about your husband's kindred."

The old lady grasped the arms of her chair and rose to her feet, seizing him by the arm to steady herself.

"What! what!" she said, "Octopia has betrayed us! She has told you! Ah, you were traitors all, always. What Darnell ever kept faith? And you, — you, with your pretty devil face, — the last and the worst of a bad breed! Oh, I would pay you and let you go, but you would be back again and again, until I died a beggar."

"If you give me this money," he said, "I will swear to you that I will never trouble you any more."

"And you would lie," she cried, her face twitching. "Oh, my God! I have prayed that this might pass away and none know. But I am old, — old, — and I must bear it. And the shame of it! — the shame!" Then she ceased a moment, a quick light in her eyes. "What did she tell you? I must know. What is it?"

"Arthur Wynne" — he said, slowly.

"Hush! hush!" she whispered, plucking with agitated fingers at his sleeve. "Speak low. What else?"

He hesitated, knowing really nothing.

"Ah," she broke out, "you know nothing, Richard Darnell. You are not clever enough for a scoundrel. Go away."

The man's face darkened. "You had best help

me," he said. "It will be worse for some one if you don't. I am a beggar. By heaven, I would be afraid if I were you and you were I."

He hardly knew what he said. He was desperate, and caught her by the arm. Something in his look scared her. She tottered back. "Help! help!" she cried. He turned as the door opened, and Octopia entered abruptly, followed by Olivia and Blake.

"What is this?" said Blake.

"He — he" — gasped Mrs. Wynne inarticulately. "Did you tell him, Octopia? You did not. No woman could be so base."

Octopia understood but too well. "I did not," she said; "oh, Dick! — brother!"

The shame of her sin was on her, its tiger-claws in her dearest affections. She threw herself on the lounge in an agony of sobbing.

Darnell stood looking at her, at Mrs. Wynne, at Olivia. Hate that was like a visible blasphemy came out on his face and played strange tricks with his features. Then he said, "Olivia!"

The girl turned from her cousin's side.

"What is it?" she asked, greatly troubled.

"Will you speak to me a moment alone?" His voice fell as he spoke, and his face grew softer.

"Yes," she said.

"And I say no!" cried Blake, moving forward.

Darnell took no notice of him. "In the entry, one moment," he added.

"Mr. Blake," she said, "no one shall stop me."

An awful pity was in her eyes, and, so saying, she turned swiftly, followed by Darnell. Blake, intensely disturbed, stood resolutely in the doorway.

"Roland," she said, "for my sake."

Darnell smiled curiously and they stepped past her lover. Then Darnell caught her by both hands and looked and looked in her eyes, — a stare of yearning love, blurred by tears.

"Good-by," he said, and, dropping her hands, drew a revolver from his breast pocket.

She recoiled, as Blake springing forward cried, "Coward!" — and then instantly controlling himself saw Darnell gently place the weapon in her trembling grasp.

"Take it! You have been sweet to me, and dear, and good; you have saved that man's life. Take it, quick, or I shall kill some one." Then, as she stood, he looked at her anew in the eyes, and, speaking low, said, — "And Octopia — my sister — you will understand." With these words he went down stairs slowly, step by step, and took his straw hat from the rack near the door and then dropped it, and went away up the road, unmindful of Pennell, who spoke to him pleasantly as he passed. The charity of God is perfect by reason of perfect knowledge. The highest charity of man involves something of poetic insight. The woman's pity had been a quicker guide to a partial comprehension of Darnell's meaning. But

Blake alone of those who were near possessed the power to understand him. He caught the true meaning of the Virginian's movement in time not to interfere by rude action. A less ready and less finely made man would have caused cruel mischief. Men of practical capacity who are also imaginative are advantaged thereby: large ranges of the possible lie open to their reason, and the improbable is not set aside as foolish.

As Darnell descended the stairs Blake took the unaccustomed weapon from Olivia's passive hand, as she stood pallid and awed, her eyes on the retreating form of her cousin. Blake put the revolver on a table.

"Miss Wynne," he said; "Olive!"

"Yes! yes!" she exclaimed, looking about her, as if recovering knowledge of her surroundings. "What is it?"

"Do not you think that you had better attend to your grandmother? Can you?" he added, looking her over with anxious scrutiny.

"Yes, yes," and she turned. "But send me some one, — Mrs. Ludlam, any one. This will kill grandmamma."

"I will see to it," he said.

"And Richard. What does he want? what does he mean? I — I must" —

"Trust me, Olive," he returned. "I understand you; I will find out."

As he left her he glanced, not incurious, at the meagre little lady, seated with her two hands on

her gold-headed dame's staff, quite past all power to speak, tremulous, watching this drama in which passions long dead for her wrestled on the edge of the abyss of murder. Octopia lay moaning on the couch.

Blake went down-stairs, and, with a word or two of explanation to the landlady, went out at the front door, where Pennell, unconscious of what had gone on, was basking in the welcome sunlight of the cool October morning.

"Mrs. Wynne is ill," said Blake. "There has been trouble. I can't stop to explain. Where did Mr. Darnell go?"

"Up the road."

As Blake ran in the direction indicated, Pennell looked after him a moment in bewilderment, and then went into the house.

When Blake overtook Darnell, he found him about unloosing one of the boats at the landing-slip. He must have moved rapidly, since it was a half mile from the house. Darnell turned as Blake's quick step was heard, and, calmly sitting down on the bow of the stranded boat, watched him sternly.

Imagination has its penalties as well as its joys. It represented to Blake responsibilities due to his having saved this man's life. He smiled a little at the thought as he ran across the meadows. The tragic passion of the man, the unusualness of his crimes, interested him; and back of all was that tenderness for all forms of suffering which for Roland had made war so terrible a duty.

Now he stood before Darnell, breathing hard. "I am glad I caught you," he said.

"I thought I was done with you forever." And rising to his feet, he began to untie the boat-rope.

"Stop," rejoined Blake, touching his shoulder. "Listen to me."

Darnell turned on him sharply.

"Don't touch me again, or I shall strangle you. Are you a fool? Can't you let a desperate man go his way?"

"No. You mean to kill yourself. If, seeing that, I do nothing, I am a sharer of your sin."

"Are you my keeper?"

"Yes, surely. I wish I were not. Oh, you must listen to me, — at any cost I must make you listen to me."

Darnell, about to launch the boat, paused. Blake possessed some of that singular power over men which makes the eye despotic to control, and which is strengthened by the habit of command. The wretched man before him felt its force. "Well, speak quickly," he said; "what is it? You can't very well hurt me more than you have; go on."

"Thank you," returned Blake, gently. "I don't question your past. God alone knows what your temptations may have been. I said to you that I would tell Miss Wynne what I knew of you, if you did not leave at once. I want to say now, that I spoke in the excitement of the moment. I

could not have done that. I never shall do that. If fear of what I can say drives you to desperation, be assured that not the grave will be more silent than I."

"The grave! I wonder if that will be really silent! Well, you have had your say. Is that all?" He was now strangely patient.

"One word more. I take it you are just now crazed with all manner of torture. You cannot think. Wait — wait! Go away from here. If money is wanting, I shall have Mr. Pennell's authority to offer you what you need."

He did not say he would give it himself.

Darnell regarded him with a look half weariness, half wonder. "You are a singular person," he said. "I do not know that ever I met any one like you. If I did not hate you, I should like to shake hands with you, — once. At all events, Mr. Blake, it is too late."

"Is it ever too late?"

"Well, yes," he answered, in a tired way. "For a gentleman, — yes. There are things a man can do and keep his place, and some he can't do; and these are known. If they had not been, I should not have cared. Even the worst of women likes the semblance of covering. Mine is gone. I am sin-naked."

"But you are safe with me."

He did not reply to this. "You can do me one favor," he said. "Promise me as a gentleman that you will not annoy me by pursuit, — by saying anything for a few hours."

"I promise," said Blake, simply.

Darnell entered the boat, and pushed it from the slip. Then he sat down, and began to row away, saying nothing further, while Blake stood still and watched him, thoughtful.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"This is my secret. Let the rust of time
Eat dull its edge within the sheath of trust."

When Blake turned homeward, he met near the inn his watchful friend, to whom he gave rapidly such explanation as was possible. Miss Wynne, he stated, had gone down-stairs to meet her cousin Miss Darnell, who had just arrived from the Cape. "It seemed all just so timed that when they went up-stairs, I following, — I was on my way to my room, — we heard Mrs. Wynne cry, 'Help!' I ran into her sitting-room, followed by the women. I will tell you more fully another time. It amounts to this, as I see it: Darnell wanted money, or something, I hardly know what, and I suppose threatened Mrs. Wynne; and from what passed — though of course there was too much confusion for one to be clear about it — Mrs. Wynne seemed to think that Miss Darnell had told her brother something which he was using to terrify the old lady."

"Blackmail, I suppose," said Francis.

"It looked like that to me. There was a second performance in the entry. Darnell bade his cousin Miss Wynne good-by, hardly looked at his sister, who was in tears on a couch, and then walked off without his hat."

"What a strange scene, Roland! He must be in love with this handsome Miss Olivia. I suspected as much. I presume that you have the key to it."

"No man has all the keys to the human riddle of a wrecked soul," returned Blake.

"Perhaps not. Darnell passed me as I was standing talking to Uncle John, as you call him. He did not speak to him or to me. Uncle John said, 'What 's comè to that man?' To my mind he had the preoccupied intense look I saw once in a poor devil of a deserter they shot in Sedgwick's corps. Did you follow him, Roland?"

"Yes."

"But why?"

"I will tell you to-morrow."

"By George, Roland, that man meant to kill himself. Now, if I know you, — and I do know you well: oh, you may laugh, but I do, — you had the same idea that I have, and you went after him, like a fool-angel, to see what you could do for him. It was like you, and it was nonsense. You had a fool-devil to deal with."

"You do not honestly think it was nonsense?"

"Yes, I do. If I saw a mad dog about to leap into a furnace, would I try to stop him?"

"You can't converse with a dog; and the moral madness of a man may be cured."

"Stuff! you know something terrible about this man. I wish I knew it too. I think his case interests you; and then you have a soft side to you

which turns up for all sorts of calamity. It will play you a trick some day. Now, Roland, if you saw a rascal condemned to death, and justly, and led out to die, you would not set him loose?"

"No — I don't know — I 'm not sure."

"Well, here is a man who conducts his own trial, with awful self-knowledge as witness, and sentences himself as a useless wretch without remedy; and you would wish to stay his hand."

"That is just it; no man is without remedy."

"Indeed! but, as you would say, there is an infinitely improbable which amounts to the practically impossible. That 's the sort of thing you say to me when you are a little dreamy. What I mean is that it is n't worth while to bother about a scamp who intends to shoot himself, — in other words, to prevent the man from doing the only service to his fellows he has ever willingly done in his life. I am glad you did not catch him, if that was what you were after."

Blake was silent for a moment. "It is amusing, Phil, to hear you talk. You have always fifty reasons for not helping a beggar, but when I have given him five cents you sneak away and empty your pockets for him. It is all talk."

"No. I represent the world and its common sense."

"Then the common sense of the recording angel will, I trust, be of a different texture."

"Possibly; and, if so, he will have his hands full. But here is Mr. Pennell."

"Leave me alone with him, Phil."

Pennell had been absent when Miss Darnell came, and to him also Blake had to make some such statement of facts as that which he had made to his own friend. It caused Pennell to look grave enough and to ask many questions, some of which were hard to answer. At last he said, —

"You have come within the knowledge of a family trouble, Mr. Blake. It has taken a form which, for certain personal reasons, distresses me greatly. Of course the little you know will be sacred?"

"I have already spoken of it to Mr. Francis. It will be as safe with him as with me. But before we go further, I think," added Blake, "that I ought to tell you that I am engaged to Miss Wynne."

"Indeed! You are a fortunate man, Mr. Blake. I do not know you well, but it is in a man's favor that such a woman can love him. I had a little suspicion about it, — I can hardly say why. You puzzled me rather unfairly when we met in New York. I was honestly sorry that you were not more frank."

"I could not be. I was under a form of pledge which obliged me to conceal what I knew, and yet my sense of right made it a duty to guard Mrs. Wynne and Miss Olivia from certain possibilities of harm."

"I see, — in a measure," said Pennell. "Our

trouble was that neither knew the other well enough to trust him fully."

"I can say now what I hinted at then, — that Darnell was known to me as a scoundrel. I came here to see what I could do to warn these women. Mrs. Wynne's age and Miss Wynne's youth made my task more difficult than I had supposed it could be. At last I settled the matter with Mr. Darnell himself. What passed is now of no moment. He will trouble them no more."

The agent paused; they had been walking slowly down the road as they conversed.

"You are a young man, Mr. Blake, and a decisive one. I trust that you feel the responsibility of your act. You have, it would seem, some power over Mr. Darnell, and you have used it, as I judge, without hesitation." Then he paused, and added, "Do you know his sister?"

"I do not; but I am sorry for her. Men like this man sow misery broadcast. Men sin and women suffer."

"Yes, and this one will suffer as few suffer. I wish I could have had a talk with you before you drove him away."

"It would have been useless. No power on earth could have stopped me. Remember who I was protecting; but above all and once for all, pray understand that this man is no common criminal. There are cases where a man must judge and condemn and sentence; this was one. No earthly shame was beyond this man's; no soul

could have been more defiled. I thank God he went. As to his story it will rest untold; be assured of that. And now let us drop him."

"Gladly," said Pennell.

"There is another matter to which I should like to go back for a moment. You have said that there was something in the nature of a secret to which Mrs. Wynne alluded, and which Mr. Darnell was basely using. Is it known to Miss Wynne? Does it trouble her, or will it do so?"

"I do not think it will unless it comes to her ears; and I do not see how that can happen. I myself think she should have known it long ago; but Mrs. Wynne did not agree with me, and it has remained more or less a mystery. If it had been treated more wholesomely, Richard Darnell could not have pretended to make use of it. I say pretended, because I had not thought that he knew even of its existence. I shall be more sure as to this in a day or two."

"If," said Blake, "I were what I hope to be, — the husband of Miss Wynne, — I should ask you to tell me more. As it is, I will only say now that at some future time, when you know me better, I shall expect to be allowed to decide whether she should still be kept ignorant or not. She has told me that there were things in her home life which had weighed upon her heavily; and possibly this is one."

"Certainly Mrs. Wynne will not mention it, and as surely Miss Darnell would not."

As to this Blake did not feel quite so secure; but he merely added, "I should like to leave the matter in this shape."

Then Pennell congratulated him warmly, and they parted on friendly terms.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"I saw as I passed hither here
A white thing on the sea,
An roun aboon it sea mews screamed,
They screamed fu wistfully."

"My love, this is the bitterest: that thou —
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say —
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still."

DURING two or three days Mrs. Wynne was ill from the excitement to which she had been subjected; but the claim made upon Olivia by her condition was of little moment compared to the demands of Miss Darnell. She did not ask for her brother, nor did she even mention his name, but lay most of the time in a darkened room, holding Olivia's hand. To Judith she was irritable and mercilessly exacting; Olivia used to wonder at the stolid patience of the silent old woman.

As to Richard Darnell, Olivia knew only that he had gone. Roland Blake had told her this; but as to the rest of the scene in which she had acted a part, she as yet did not understand it, and would wait to hear, being of temperate curiosity, and having a heart alive with thankful joy and hands too full of care to leave leisure for more than a few golden moments now and then with Blake.

It was hard not to pity the tall, wasted, sick woman, with her refined face and her gentle claims to be soothed or caressed in her fits of self-abasement. When Olivia tried to escape, she would say, "Don't leave me, dearest! I am so wretched!" and then her long arms fell around the girl and held her in a passionate embrace. As Octopia slept little and refused to eat, Olivia became alarmed, and proposed to send for a doctor; but this the invalid resolutely declined.

Thus the days went by, somewhat drearily. Of Darnell no one heard, and Francis was obliged to return home, carrying with him the pleasant news of Blake's good fortune.

At last one morning Octopia said suddenly to Olivia, "Where is my brother?"

"I do not know," she returned. "He went away on Thursday."

"Is Mr. Pennell here?"

"Yes. He has been anxious about you."

"He is very good, dear. Every one is good, except me. I have been foolish. I did not want to do any harm. But you won't cease to love me, Olive? and please to shut out the light, dear, — and a little cologne, my love."

Olivia rose to do as she was asked.

"You said Mr. Pennell was still here. Do you think I am strong enough to see him? I want to talk to him. Could you turn the pillow?"

"You might get on the lounge, cousin."

"Yes. Send Judith here. Do I look horribly, Olive?"

"You are very pale."

"Ah! Send Judith, please, and at once. Tell her I cannot wait. She is getting so lazy!"

Olivia found the old black woman seated in the entry, patiently waiting, as usual, without needlework, — merely gazing through the cobwebbed window at the chickens in the garden below her.

"Miss Octopia wants you. Do you think, Judith, she is seriously sick? She does not seem very weak, and yet she eats almost nothing, and I do not believe she sleeps at all."

A lazy smile woke up, as if by degrees, among the torpid wrinkles of the black's face. Then she said, with a certain energy, —

"She not die dis time, Miss Olive. I hope she don't go to die jes' yet. She been gittin' good dese las' days. I has de hope she not die yet. De Lord he might forgib dat woman."

"Judith!" exclaimed Olivia, "how can you be so wicked?"

"Guess maybe I done say too much."

"You should be ashamed!"

"Ain't had much shame sence I was 'bout as ole as you, chile," said Judith. "You does n't know much of dis world yet. Dar 's her bell." And, turning, she left Olivia half stupefied at the glimpse she had got of the old slave's desolated past.

"I ought to be very good," said the girl, aloud, and went down-stairs to meet her lover.

When, to Pennell's great delight, he was told

that Miss Darnell desired to see him, he entered her room, and found her lying on a lounge. Her short hair curled over her pale face, and her little cap and morning-dress were as neat as usual.

"You are very amiable to come and see me," she said, in her pleasant Southern voice. "I should have asked to talk with you before, but I have been so utterly miserable. Do sit down."

He obeyed her. He was deeply moved: her set, drawn face and melancholy eyes shocked him.

"You know, Miss Octopia, that there is no time when I am not at your service. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Where is Richard?" she asked abruptly.

"I do not know. He went away suddenly on Thursday, and has not come back."

"Does no one know?"

"I think not; but I have no doubt we shall soon hear of him."

"Yes, I dare say," she returned, — "when he wants money. And Mrs. Wynne, — she might have been to see me."

"She is better, — much better," he said, evasively.

Then there was a brief pause, and she spoke again: —

"Why does Cousin Anne neglect me?"

"I hardly know. She is still weak."

"It does n't matter. I want to say something, Mr. Pennell, and it is very hard to say."

"Can I make it easier?"

"No. No one can do that." And, hiding her face in her hands, she continued, —

"I think Richard tried to get money from Cousin Anne by pretending he knew something of Arthur Wynne's death."

"He could not have done that!"

"Yes, it was so. Oh, I am sure it was so. I would give — oh, I would give my right hand to be sure it was not so. I — I — you know what I did for my cousins. Perhaps I overrated the service I did them. If I reminded Cousin Anne of it, — and I did; yes, I did, — it was because I wanted what they never gave me, — their love. They never really loved me, and I had helped them well. It is so hard to say! I wanted Olive to marry my brother, and the devil tempted me to show them what power I possessed."

"My God!" cried Pennell; "please not to go on. You are sick. Surely you cannot really know what you are saying?" He did not guess the strange relief which the abasement of confession gave her.

"I know well enough," she cried.

He took her hand kindly, only half aware of the act.

"Don't touch me," she said. "I am vile. How can you touch me?"

"We have all sinned," he said, his eyes full of tears.

"But I did not tell Richard that Arthur Wynne

had killed himself; indeed I did not. How could Cousin Anne believe that? You believe me, do you not?" And she turned her questioning eyes upon him in soft entreaty.

"Surely I believe you. I do not think you have ever willingly done wrong. As to Mrs. Wynne, you must allow something for her morbidness. Arthur Wynne was negligent, and left his partners unwatched. They brought the appearance of dishonor on a sensitive man, and what followed you know. It was unwise of you to hide it. Of course any one who knows her can easily understand Mrs. Wynne's horror at the idea of her son's suicide coming to his daughter's knowledge; but there was not the shadow of wrong on that man. I would have told the girl all there was to tell as soon as she was old enough to hear it. But with Mrs. Wynne it was almost an insanity. It terrified her to mention it. There was no course possible except to obey her wishes. I am sure that you who are sensitive must in your self-reproach have overstated your own blame."

"I have not," she said, shuddering. "I boasted to Richard that I could have what I wanted; I told him that Mrs. Wynne was in my power; I played with the idea that one way or another I could rule Olivia; and then — oh, Mr. Pennell, when I found that he meant to make believe that he knew what I knew, when I grew sure that he was really going to do what I had only just thought of doing, — oh, then I saw! then I saw!

I wish I had done it! Then he could not have been as wicked as I, — my beautiful boy-brother! Oh, I would have sinned in his place and saved him."

He was the one strong love of a life, greedy of tenderness, but incapable of a wide range of loving, eager to get, unable to give as largely.

Pennell was silent. He sat holding his hat between his knees. Then he set the hat on the floor and put on his spectacles, and at once took them off and wiped them, and finally put them in his pocket.

"Do you think Richard will come back?" she said. At that hour he was lying, a ghastly thing to see, on the beach at Cape May, and about him was a group of rough men wondering who he might be and whence the dark breakers had brought their prey.

"I do not know," said Pennell. "I have been making all possible inquiries. If he is found, or when he is found, be sure I shall help him."

"You are a true friend," she cried. "I could not have believed that after what I have told you any one would want to help us."

"But," he said, looking down, "I love you. That is the simplest of all human explanations. Don't let that annoy you. I did not mean to trouble you again; but there are things too strong for our common sense, and perhaps — perhaps it may make you feel that you are not quite deserted."

"How can it be?" she said. "No man could love a woman like me, and least of all a man like you."

"Try me, Octopia," he said. "It is not pity that moves me."

"Don't ask me. How can I dare to think of sharing a good man's life? I cannot! I cannot! always there would be this between us. The time would come when — when — oh! I cannot explain. You must surely understand. It would end ill! It would end ill."

He was still at least a minute, looking down at the floor, and at last said, —

"Listen to me a little. I can say that with God's help I have tried for many a year to live a just and honest life. But" — and he paused, as if in pain, and drew a long breath — "there was a time — I was young and sorely tempted — when I, too, deeply sinned. I did — I did a thing — I will not tell you what. Your sin was light compared to mine. One man was good to me then. I tremble to-day at the thought of what but for Arthur Wynne I might have become."

"Why did you tell me this?" she cried, starting up. She had a strange feeling that she would rather not have known it. Then in turn some womanly feeling of the awfulness of this self-sacrificial confession overcame her as she looked up. "You are a noble gentleman," she said, gently, and took his hand and kissed it and let it fall.

"Will you try to love me?" he said. "Let us

ask God to help two souls that have been astray to go righteously through what years He gives them."

"I will," she whispered, feebly. "So help me God, I will try to be a better woman. And — and please to go now, and after a while — perhaps in a few weeks — we can talk of this again. Now I am worn out; and you have been — oh, you have been so good to me!"

Then Pennell arose, and, merely thanking her, went away, more sad, more grave, and yet more happy, than when, a half hour before, he had climbed the narrow, creaking staircase of the inn.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Prithee, sir, —
The end is the beginning."

Some weeks had gone by, Mrs. Wynne had soon become well enough to be moved to Philadelphia, and was comfortably settled in pleasant apartments. Miss Francis aided to relieve Olivia of this growing care, and new and happy associations graciously illuminated for Olivia the joyous pages of which the text was a strong and helpful love.

The death of Darnell was, of course, soon known to all concerned. The manner of it was gladly accepted as doubtful, and Octopia had gone to Virginia for a long visit.

Soon after they came to the old city of Penn, Blake had urged Olive to renew her youthful habit of riding, and now he was to leave her for a few weeks that he might see to some business in the North. They had turned into the bridle-path below Belmont in the Park, and followed it under tulip-trees and over grass-lands, and again entered the dense woods which skirt the Reading Railroad.

It was a late October day, with loving sunshine everywhere, and the temperate friendliness of cool winds. On the soft brown mould was a mottled

covering of many-tinted leaves, in which the hoofs of the horses rustled as they walked. The brown boles of oak and pine rose over them; ragged birches and silvery beeches made pleasant contrast; at their feet the ruddy sumach and the umber ferns; over all a canopy of red and gold, the gorgeous heraldry of the dying year.

The glamour of the autumn woods was about them, and they rode on in silence, conversing only with the ready eyes of youth and love.

There is something gently weird, a not unkindly sadness, in the time, — a faint promise of something about to be, —

"Like that mysterious hour which comes before the break of day."

They crossed a brook flecked with dancing leaves, and paused at a spring which all those who love this delicious wood-ride know so well.

Olivia sat square in the saddle, rosy and vigorous, the folds of her dark habit dotted with crimson and yellow leaves, in her waist-belt a spray of ruby oak. A pretty picture, Blake thought, as he stood folding a piece of birch bark that he might make a drinking-cup for her.

"Thanks, Roland," she said, as he stood with a hand on her horse's mane. "How can one be as happy as I am? When I look back and think, it seems to me incredible. You cannot imagine how great is the change, because you cannot even yet realize how trying was my life at home. You do not know Octopia. She is very much altered, poor thing!"

"What made it so hard, Olive?"

"I can hardly say. She was gentle and kind, — oh, quite too sweet, — except at times, when nothing pleased her. But she wanted all of everybody about her; and then, as she had no serious work, she thought about herself and thought she did n't think about herself. You see, it 's quite confusing, Roland."

"Rather," he said, laughing. "I presume that no man can understand such women. But she was really ill, I suppose?"

"Yes, — at times very ill. I think, Roland, that what must be the worst evil of half-sick people is the absence of regular work, of set duties, — things they have to do."

"*Must* is a noble tonic," he said. "And now we *must* go home."

"Thank you, my lord," she cried merrily.

"One thing more, Olive, as I leave you to-morrow. You are aware that there is some trouble which Mrs. Wynne is desirous you should not know."

"Yes," she returned, surprised. It had been much on her mind of late.

"It is known, Olive, to her, to your cousin, and to Mr. Pennell. I too have learned of late what it is."

"Then I know it too."

"How, dear? I don't quite see your meaning."

"Oh, stupid Roland! What is yours is mine."

"But if I think best not tell you, — if I assure

you that it need not trouble you, — if I say it is best, that now it is far away in time and cannot help and may sadden you to know it, — will you be satisfied to leave it in my keeping?"

"It is about my dear father?" she said.

"Yes."

"Kiss me, Roland." And she bent over in the saddle and met his lips.

"Thank you," he said, understanding her well.

Then they rode out of the wood and on to the hills above the Schuylkill, and westward over grassy turf into the lustre of the purple twilight.

I see them as they pass, the woman's face still tender with the memory of a thought that saddened, the man erect, — the trooper's seat, rather, as it were, standing in the stirrups, — resolute of feature, grave as if he shared her mood.

He turns and says something. I do not know what it is: they seem to have got away from me. She smiles, and it is like the smile of a trustful child, — oh, very pretty in a woman's face.

A like expression gently stirs his strong brown features. Their hands touch and part. She nods affirmatively.

It is past my comprehension. Then I say, seeing them ride away, "Good luck have thou with thine honor," and so resume my solitary walk.

Two years have gone. Mrs. Wynne is dead. Roland Blake is in Paris with his wife, and now is well through with his work at the School of Mines and is looking homeward.

"There is a letter from Phil," he says.

"And will you read it to me, please?"

"'DEAR ROLAND, —

"'The lands in' — Oh! there is a lot of it about business; you won't care to hear that.

"'It is good to hear of you as coming home.

"'Your wife will be amused to hear that I am to be godfather to Alice's baby, next week. It 's the only form of paternity in which the sins of the fathers are not too distinctly visited on the children. I am afraid that in my own youth the matter was, on the whole, rather reversed. The world uses me kindly, being like a woman and fondly attached to those who abuse it.

"'I saw Mrs. Pennell last week. Poor Addenda! He is pretty bald — old Time, that relentless Indian, has got his scalp. He was dressed like an Englishman, and had a rose in a well-buttoned-up coat. He is not allowed to buy any more clocks, but Mrs. Octopia Addenda Pennell has some neat diamonds. I think she would like him to give up business and spend most of his time at home. He wisely resists, but I am of opinion will go to the wall soon or late. She has what I should call flabby obstinacy of purpose, — a sort of unsteady fractional persistency, which does not seem to have much fibre to it and yet is pretty sure to win.'"

"Oh, I know," laughed Olivia, looking up from her sewing.

"'Nevertheless, the man seems to like it, as a

whole. I dined there last week, and the thing was very well done. She looked as much as ever like that medal of Malatesta Novellus; and really you could go far before you saw so graceful a creature. As for Pennell, he followed her about with a shawl and a scent-bottle, and says he has left the club and prefers the evening tranquillity of domestic life. Altogether, it is an interesting *ménage*. As you can't chaff me with an ocean between us, I can now tell you that on that unpleasant day at the Court-house when you left Darnell at the slip I myself took a boat and pulled after him. What idiocy I should have been guilty of had we met, who can say? No man can be always as wise as I am usually. His boat was at the inlet, — no one in it; and I found his handkerchief on the beach. That 's all of it. Alice sends love.'

"It was so like him," said Roland.

THE END.

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